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THE QUIET SHORE

By Walter Havighurst

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The Quiet Shore

THE QUIET SHORE

By

WALTER HAVIGHURST

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1937

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To
my mother
and
my father

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THE QUIET SHORE

I

Return

1

Twilight was the time to get there—all day long the hot fields of Ohio and the sunny Ohio towns, and then at twilight the lake seen through the trees. Dusk lay deep in the wood lot (Grandpa's name still held) but under the waning sky the lake was tranquil with light. It was not water but fluid light on summer evenings, with the sun gone in a smoky splendor over Toledo and the moon growing through the gray haze of Cleveland. Darkness had come to the highway with its swift race of headlamps, a dimness had gathered across the inland fields; but the lake was luminous, shoreless, unearthly. Years ago in the white church at Pride's Crossing the minister had said: *The peace of God that passes understanding*—that was the water at twilight. That was Lake Erie in the waning day.

It was so in Grandpa's time, when Sandusky was a crossroads and Cleveland was a sprawling town at the canal mouth and Petroleum Nasby wrote a corn-shuck column for the Toledo *Blade*. The lake was the same even then, so slow to give up the day, so tranquil on an August evening. And it was unchanged tonight, with the stacks of Toledo smoking up a dusk somewhere in the west and the false lights of Cedar Point picking out the roller-coaster beyond the sober, honest flashing of the signal light at Wood End.

Feeling the familiar quiet, Alan dropped his bag beside the leaning trunk of the old apple tree that grew perversely at the edge of land. Why had no one come to meet him? Why was the terrace empty and the place so still? One part of his mind was wondering about the silence, and the other was glad that it was so, that he could walk alone through the wood lot and past the houses and come home first to twilight on that shore. The lake was tranquil. Above the darkening shore the sky looked innocent, untroubled, and the water was as dispassionate and serene as in the days when Grandpa had driven to Sandusky with a load of corn. In other places there were questions and confusion, there was man's sharp strife. There was the tragic immensity of cities and the blind frustration of unnumbered lives, and nobody could think that the world was like this, vast and gentle and compassionate. Already, after thirty hours in America, Alan had seen enough to know the doubts and uncertainties in his land. Bread lines in the cities; P.W.A. projects with the workmen empty-hearted at their toil; men on the roads, not tramps or hobos—they have a different look—but men plodding because there was nothing in the last town and there might be something in the next, anyway the road is better than sitting in wait for nothing: a dog might do that, but a man can't. One day had shown him a good deal. And before that, he had seen it in the American papers in London: doubts, uncertainties, a new shrillness, the future of course —in America there had always been the future—but this was not the familiar future in America, it was half-reluctant and wholly compulsory fore-looking; and in America at last the old hopes were crumbling: freedom, the faith in men,

the myth of everyman and his sanctity. The hopes were shadowed and the faith was faltering, and it was hard now in America to dream the old dreams. So he was glad to stand quiet and feel the familiar place about him. It, at least, had not changed. The lake was tranquil with twilight, and around him in the dimness lay the fields of home.

Now he lingered at the end of the hemlock wind-break and there were many things to think of while the surf washed softly on the sands below. The shore dropped off sharply; it was thirty feet to the hard white beach where two sandpipers scurried primly at the water's edge. The modest height gave a suggestive sweep to the lake, and as he stood there Alan Bradley was moved again with youth's vague ardor and unrest: the world for him would always wait out there beyond the water's rim. That had been his earliest dream and his most persistent memory, and he would not outgrow it. Whatever he might seek, whatever purposes or dreams or achievements, in the quiet unshared images of his own heart the lake would always be the way to them. For him the world lay out there. The past was there and the future was there also. So it was not strange that certain hours in London, when life seemed urgent and near and its claims were made upon him, brought a memory of the lake at twilight. This sad pale light of evening, so unclouded and so still, was the first mood of the earth that had moved him. Then he was a boy, troubled and silent and wanting to be alone, his heart pounding painfully and his boy's mind not knowing why. And now at twenty-three, feeling mature as one feels on return to a familiar and missed place, the same mood moved him in the same way.

There were many things to think about this first evening, while the gray skies and the gray cities across the Atlantic faded in his mind and the warm, vibrant, flowing life of mid-America grew familiar. All day there had been a sense of profound home-coming, of manhood returning to the earth that nurtured it, of a mind remembering the life that shaped its growth. And there had been surprise in the spaciousness and order of America. All the way from New York to Ohio he had seen a splendid and a troubled land, and it was hard to say which was true, the men hopeless on the roads or that other country: the soaring new-world cities, the breathless American architecture, the stammering turrets and terraces of stone repeating themselves in New York, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City, San Francisco, the incredible white shafts and the jeweled towers against the tall American sky; the towns sprawling in the level lands, the warm friendly streets with the elm trees arched above, the shrill curve of a railway track and the train pounding to a stop beneath the swinging spout of a faded water tank; the villages dreaming beside the rivers, the warm sweet summer smell of mud banks, the dusty weeds climbing up at the roadside, the willows twinkling in the hot noon air. And everywhere the strong light, the heat, the strident sound of American voices, the restlessness over this land and the fulfillment too; the pound of motor-driven wheels, the blurred and streaming traffic on Number 20 out of Cleveland, the momentous race along that awful artery of stone.

This, all this was America. This electric life that webbed the continent, it was not gone even though a confusion was

in it; perhaps it was the true America still. He had felt it days ago, before land was sighted off Maine and Massachusetts. Something was in that sea-keen air, some new fiber, some significance. All that last evening on shipboard the western horizon had a heroic light.

And now the lake, with daylight lingering there for a last mood of peace. It was America, too. And in a young man's first traveling and return there was this remembrance and discovery. Like all important things of the mind and heart, it would never come a second time, and Alan lingered there while the first white stars came in the evening sky. He coughed quietly and watched a freighter's lights move into the horizon.

This, he reminded himself, was what he had pictured so many times when he was homesick for the hot Ohio sky in August or snow drifting on those sands. It was unchanged: the long and quiet shore and above it the terrace with the clustered houses among the trees and around them the many acres of his grandfather's land. This life remained as he had left it, and so he wondered now at the long bitterness that lay between those houses. He remembered it as from a distance, and it seemed but half real in this fading light. The silent enmity, the sharp prolonged mistrust, could it be unchanged, too? Even as his mind framed the question he knew how pointless it was; this family did not give up old ways so easily. It would remain a proud, defiant hate, the children and grandchildren of Roger Bradley's first wife drawn up against those of his second wife: the Sletter Bradleys against the Murdock Bradleys, farmers against business people, the fields against the city. Their hate would be un-

changed, and their pride in each other, too, for in Buffalo Sterling Bradley was known to boast that his brothers were the best farmers in Ohio, and in Pride's Crossing Jonas Bradley bragged that his brothers were the shrewdest business men outside of Wall Street. So it was a curious hate, with a Bradley texture in it, a compound of fear, distrust, and loyalty, and perhaps a common tie that bound them to this place.

There in the dusk were the Bradley houses, set among maples and elms, and in their midst was the big frame Homestead, rambling and of another century, with the long three-sided porch and the four irregular gables. It was strange in America where people drift and are not permanent (*we follow the business wherever it calls*), in America, land of migrations, of restless wandering (one family scattered from Long Island to El Paso; the letters "home" hurrying on the trains all night across the Cascade Mountains and through the echoing canyons of New Mexico and over the bridges of the Mississippi)—it was strange that one family should be so rooted. Perhaps there were other families like them, American families in Texas, Maine, and Oregon who knew that hold of heritage. For now it seemed to Alan the strength of place that brought the Bradleys back. He knew it was not love for one another, nor loyalty to Grandpa; and he suspected it was something more than hope of inheritance. Perhaps, even in America, it was the strength of a native place.

2

While his mind dwelt on the Bradleys, drawn back to the old farmstead season after season, Alan knew a sense of guilt. His first home-coming had been to the lake. Now he took his bag and walked toward the houses half hidden in the darkness of the elms.

The house he approached took gradual outline. A lamp was burning in the hallway and threw a square of subdued light across the porch. But no voices came from the dimness of the veranda, and no one hurried to the screen door calling, "Alan! Here's Alan!" The house seemed a part of the dusk, inanimate and waiting.

He dropped his bag in the doorway and called. There was only the sedate ticking of the old walnut clock from the unlighted living room. He saw his mother's familiar ulster coat thrown over the hall table at the foot of the stairs. And now he looked hard at a marine cap with the bright gold trim above the stiff blue visor. What could his brother Carl be doing here?

The sound of a door's closing in another house took him outside and led him, wondering and slightly troubled, through the deep shadows to the Homestead where many lights were burning. It was strange that they should all be there. He was still wondering when his mother met him in the doorway.

"Alan! I'm so glad you've come." But in her kiss there was a trembling breath, and her face was anxious.

"What's going on, mother? This place isn't natural. What's wrong?"

His mother answered like a Bradley, her mouth firm and her gray eyes unclouded. "Your grandfather is dying."

3

When the doctor signaled, they climbed the broad staircase and filed into the bedroom. Grandpa lay there in the big four-poster, his long legs outlined beneath the spread and his shoulders propped against a mound of pillows. His eyes were closed, and that made his cheek bones, strong and high above the gray waste of his beard, dominate his face. His big hands lay on the white spread. They were red and strong, despite his ninety years, and his wrists were woolly with golden hairs where the sleeves of his nightgown had slipped up. That looked natural, for his arms were always too long for his shirts and his wrists always dangled bare like the wrists of a growing boy.

Now the family was assembled, the Sletter Bradleys in a solid rank on one side of the bed and the Murdock Bradleys on the other. In the back of his mind Alan knew there was something absurd about this scene, something too fixed and deliberate to be real. Of course it was real, and he had only to stare at those two rows of faces, the strong simple Sletter faces and the urbane anxious faces of the Murdocks, all of them so stubborn, to know how real it was. The Murdocks stood there—Uncle Sterling and Uncle Kirkwall and their wives and his half-cousins Richard and Phyllis and Kirk, and Aunt Rosemary and Uncle Ansel with the girls, his half-cousins, Donna and Ruth. They were Bradleys, but they were Murdocks, the children and grandchildren of Roger

Bradley's second wife, and their names were fine Murdock names that had been used for generations. They were Bradleys, but they had the Murdock darkness of hair and eyes along with the straight mouth and the angular forehead that was the Bradley badge. Alongside Alan were the other Bradleys, the Sletter Bradleys, his own mother, his Uncle Jonas and his Aunt Kate, his brother Carl and his cousins, Janice and Irma and Anne. He didn't need to look at them to see the gray Bradley eyes and the Bradley mouth, and he didn't need to hear them talk to remember the clipped finality of Bradley speech. Now the two ranks were waiting there to watch the old man die, and they were stubbornly waiting to see which Bradleys, the Murdocks or the Sletters, would have Grandpa's last look and his final blessing.

Yes, it was theatrical and absurd, this headstrong family rivalry. It was like something in a book, a slightly old-fashioned book, and yet it was real. Grandpa was the reason for it, and he was not at all like something in a book. He was as real as the gnarled old apple tree that grew perversely above the lake at the edge of the line of hemlocks. Now he opened his eyes, and that gray searching glance, restive and unsatisfied, was the meaning of the old man lying there. He looked from the Murdocks to the Sletters, and it seemed that a light was born in those stern eyes. His tight mouth opened to speak.

"Sterling." And the Murdocks leaned in unison. Sterling Bradley bowed his grave face with the hair graying above his handsome temples and took one of those hairy hands between his own.

"Yes, father."

The old man drew his hand away. "Don't treat me like a woman."

The Murdocks winced.

He turned to the other row of his descendants. Now the Sletters waited.

"Jonas, I'm not—"

"Yes . . . father," Jonas said awkwardly, his red wrinkled face leaning in the light and his weathered hands hanging loosely.

The gray glance swept the anxious faces. Then his gaze stopped at the foot of the bed. "There's Alan. Why didn't you tell me? Come here, Alan. Let me see you." He held up his hand. "You don't look right, son. Been too far away from home, eh? Too long away from home." Then his eyes closed and the hand fell back on the bed.

There was a rustle of skirts and a footstep on the stairs. Into the room came a tall figure, a woman in the dark and flowing dress of an old fashion. She moved with a singular grace and detachment, going directly to the foot of the bed, her eyes fixed on the old man propped in the pillows. When she stood there in the light she was a figure of curious dignity, but her face was childlike and empty and her dark eyes wandered.

"Where's Jo-Jo?" she asked. "Where's Jo-Jo?"

Rosemary put a hand on her arm. "There, Ursula. Don't worry about Jo-Jo now."

But Ursula repeated, her eyes seeking and a patient sadness in her voice: "Where's Jo-Jo?"

Then the doctor appeared. He bent over Grandpa's quiet figure and took the fallen wrist in his hand, making the

count. When it was done he signaled them away. Quietl the Bradleys filed down the stairs.

4

They waited quietly in the big living room, with the cathedral clock ticking in a loud disdain from the hall. The Sletters sat staring across the room. They were uneasy in this house that they had not visited for more than thirty years. And the Murdocks were restless, exchanging frowns among themselves and glancing narrowly at the others.

His mother sat by Alan, and her voice was a hoarse whisper. "We tried to get word to you. We wired the boat. Didn't you get the message?"

There was a warning "Sh-h-h" from Aunt Rosemary, and a dark reprimand in all the Murdock faces. While Grandpa lay dying the Sletters need not whisper. Then Alan coughed and he saw their reproof again.

He slipped out onto the porch. It was cooler there, and free from the taut constraint and the tight pull of rivalry and grief that filled the house. It was not only that Grandpa lay so still up there; always Alan had felt that tension in the Homestead. The house was both peace and misgiving; it pulled him both ways. Always it was haunted by Ursula's search, tragic and wondering. And always it would be the sign of Grandpa's dream, for which he had labored. Solid and certain, the place had seen three generations of life; and in it had deepened the stubborn Bradley conflict, a conflict so obscurely troubling because it was compounded of pride and misunderstanding, of resentment and love.

While he stood on the veranda a spark glowed for an instant beside the big elm in the inky shadow. He stepped down softly and crossed on the grass. The cigarette glowed again.

"Carl," he said, his voice still guarded from the house.

"Why, Alan!" He was startled at the voice in the darkness. "I didn't hear you. It's me, Donna."

She stepped out from the shadow and the faint light from the porch fell on her face. She stood there straight and slender, her eyes swimming even in those shadows, her cigarette feathering in her hand.

"Donna. You're crying. I'm sorry." And he started away.

"No. It's all right. I can't stand it in there, that's all." She dropped her cigarette and ground it with her foot. "They're all so stony, glaring at each other. I mean yours and mine. And Grandpa dying with them glaring across his bed. It's not like this." And she lifted her eyes to the soft web of branches hung with August stars. Around them the shadows lay very deep and tangible. Beyond the terrace the lake washed in a long sigh that came through darkness softly. "Things need each other," she finished quietly.

Alan looked up again at the summer sky and his gaze swung out across the lake, dark now and vaster than by day. Far out and low on the water a spaced string of lights marked an ore boat passing westward.

"I've dreamed of nights like this," he said. "And then I was afraid it couldn't be the way I remembered. It is, though."

They found themselves moving over the terrace, and by

some unspoken agreement they came to the wild apple tree leaning above the shore.

Donna breathed deeply, turning her face to the lake's darkness. "This is better," she said. Then she turned to Alan. "You've just come back, haven't you?"

"Yes. I came out here first. Before I went to the house even. That's a dutiful Bradley, isn't it?"

She laughed. "I slept out here once last August. The last night before we went back home. The family searched the highway for me all the way to Sandusky. They had decided I was kidnaped, and the police were at the house when I came in that morning." Her eyes came back to him quickly. "I remember seeing you out here, early mornings sometimes when I first woke up and looked out from the sleeping porch. I used to wonder what you were thinking about."

There was a question in her words, and Alan answered: "Not thinking, probably. Just watching the daylight come. Something pulled me out here every time I woke up early."

He heard her take a new breath, deep and long. Then she spoke in her impulsive way. "It's funny. We don't know each other, really. But we feel the same things."

"Maybe it's the Bradley in us."

"No," she said, watching for the repeated flash on Wood End. "It's not a Bradley feeling." Quickly her eyes returned to him. "We used to quarrel. You remember?"

"Yes. On the beach. We had to, Murdocks and Sletters. That seems ages ago."

She was silent, and all at once he saw the beach years ago and his brother Carl and her cousin Kirk quarreling. "Sletter-hog," the fighting word, and then they were drawn up,

the Sletters and the Murdocks. He saw the white drawn hate in their faces and their white clenched hands. In their bathing suits they edged with tense bare toes over the sands. He heard the thud of hard bare blows. They fought in a silent rage, their jaws set and their narrow eyes hating. Alan remembered the bright blood falling down Carl's face and onto his white shoulder, the raw and bleeding knuckles, the sick naked sound of fists on faces. And, crouched trembling in the sand, he and Donna, their eyes wide with terror and their mouths tense with hate. . . . Afterward Carl was crying bitterly, his shoulders heaving under his stained bathing suit, and Alan brought up a pail of lake water and dabbed at his cut mouth and the black drying blood on his knuckles.

"What are you thinking about?" Donna asked.

He smiled a troubled smile in the darkness. "About a day on the beach. It must have been ten years ago. When Carl and Kirk fought in their bathing suits. They must have fought other times, but I only remember that one. It was such a naked fight. I never have forgotten."

"Yes," she said. "I remember. I squeezed my water-wings till they burst. And then I ran up the terrace crying. Oh, I hated you!"

"Of course you did."

"It seems silly now." She looked through the darkness to the lighted houses under the trees. "But they still hate each other. And I suppose I wouldn't have spoken to you tonight if you hadn't mistaken me in the darkness."

"And I wouldn't have stayed to speak to you if I hadn't been away. I forgot how to act here."

"Why is it, Alan?" she asked impulsively. "What makes them act that way? There must be reasons."

"We're farmers," Alan said. "You're business people."

"That couldn't do it."

"It does, though. And both sides want the farm. It's worth a fortune now."

"But there's more than that, Alan. There must be."

"Yes. . . . Ursula."

"Maybe. That's what they used to say. They never talk about it now. But why should that make such a difference?"

"You know." Alan's voice was toneless. "My father told her to get out of the field. There was a stallion there and he was dangerous. She wouldn't go because she was looking for Jo-Jo. Then it was too late. Father couldn't reach her before the stallion. His forefoot crushed her skull."

"That was more than thirty years ago. Poor Ursula, still looking for Jo-Jo."

"They've never forgiven father," Alan went on. "They said he drove the stallion toward her. The fools!"

She put a hand on his arm. "You do hate us, don't you?"

He laughed shortly. "Family spirit. Isn't it terrible?"

"Yes. It's terrible."

"Father never forgot it, not even for a minute. To have them think he did it almost made him believe it. You know he'd walk all the way around the grove to keep from meeting Ursula. And the last thing he said before he died was, 'Ursula! Look out! Look out, Ursula!' He died in that delirium."

Donna looked away in the summer darkness. The trees sighed with the warm night wind. Out over the lake the

stars hung so low on the water that the diminishing lights of the ore boat fitted into a constellation.

"It doesn't seem real now," she said as if to herself. Then her voice lifted. "You've been gone three years. What did you do? Tell me about it."

"I studied mostly."

"In London, weren't you? What was it like?"

"Terribly lonely, and exciting too. What have you been doing?"

"Three years in Vassar. And I'm not a student. I flunked baby phil. I have to make it up. I was supposed to study all summer."

"Did you?"

"I couldn't. Not with this water and this sky. I tried, but it seemed so silly. Seligman's *Modern European Philosophy.* Thousands of pages about Comte and Schelling and Leibnitz and Descartes. Finally I tied a couple of bricks around it and went out in the sailboat and dropped it over."

Alan smiled, and he was wondering about this girl who had changed so since he last saw her. Even in the darkness he knew the change in her face, the eyes so direct, unwavering, the features clear and frank, the mouth so generous. And he could hear it in her voice, composed, unhurried. All her words were quiet and assured, and they mingled with the sound of water.

Alan coughed quietly, his shoulders shaking. "Sorry," he said. "Cigarette?" When she refused he struck a light for himself.

She saw his eyes in the brief flare of the match. "Alan," she said, "you look so thin. You're not well. What is it?"

"A bit tired," he said. "I rode all night on the bus."

"On the bus, from New York? Why?"

"Couldn't afford the train fare."

"Grandpa would have paid it. He'd do anything for you."

"That's the trouble. He's done too much already. College, and then three years abroad. You know your mother thinks so."

"Yes. I'll admit it. They think he ought to spend his money on the Murdocks. They say the Sletters get their living out of the farm anyway. And with business the way it is they feel terribly hard up."

"I know it. That's one reason I'm glad to be back."

"What's another, Alan?"

"Oh, I don't know." He looked around thoughtfully in the darkness. "The lake. Home. I belong here. I never knew how much I belonged here until I saw those old, old towns in Scotland, Dumfries and Aberdeen and Ayr. Everything in them so secure, so native. It made me know what brings the Bradleys back here."

"I've wondered," she said.

"Well, that's it. I'm sure. I used to think they came back here to hate each other. Hate is a bond, you know, as strong as love, only different."

She looked at him closely in the darkness, and said irrelevantly: "You're a funny boy, Alan."

"And I used to think you were a funny girl. Just three years ago, before I left, I remember how young you seemed. I was through college, and that seemed pretty old. You were a schoolgirl in short white dresses and you went around

saying, 'Donk you,' imitating some Swedish movie actress."

Donna laughed. "I remember."

He was silent then, wondering at this cousin whom he had known as long as he could remember, and yet who had been only one of the other family, to resent and ignore. And now he felt in her his own dim and obdurate affection for this place and for the common life that had first rooted there. One blood, one bone, one way of feeling, one steadfastness—it was their common heritage. Even now up there in the big house Grandpa lay with his red hands on the counterpane, and they were both the issue of his life in this place. The same inheritance, and yet not the same at all. The difference was in her voice—no Sletter had a voice like that—and it was in her face, the pure features, the airy quality. No Sletter woman had that clear fine throat, nor carried her head so lifted.

Then her voice broke into his thought. "What will you do now, Alan? Next year, I mean? Teach somewhere?"

"No. I have a place in Chicago. In the Newberry Library. I'll do historical research."

"Was that your subject? History?"

"Yes."

"I loathe it."

"You loathe history?"

"Positively."

"All history?"

"Every line of it."

"That's absurd, Donna." He felt like an old man as he said it.

"I do, though."

"Well, take this place." He waved his hand about the dark trees and the dark land beyond, and he lingered long enough to include the lights glimmering at Cedar Point and the steady sober flashing out in the dark waters at Wood End. "It's all history. Wouldn't you like to know what this was like when the first packet boats stopped at the landings, when the roads were impassable in mud and the farmers set wolf-traps outside their hencoops? Wouldn't you like to know all the change that Grandpa has seen? Wouldn't his memory be exciting?"

She was gazing over the dark shore. "Of course it would. Fascinating."

"Well, that's history."

She shook her head firmly, so that the pale shadows of the trees moved across her face and showed the light in her hair. "It's not what they teach at Vassar."

There was a voice from back among the trees.

"It's mother," Donna said. "She'll wonder if I'm drowned. She's that way."

Slowly they crossed the terrace to the houses.

"Donna, we've looked all over—" At that point they came fully into the light, and Alan knew what stopped the words there. His aunt stood in the light of the porch. She seemed very straight with a white coat about her firm full figure. Her voice was brittle as she said, "Good evening, Alan."

Alan replied to her, and then Donna's voice was warm in his ear. "Now I'll get it. Good night, Alan. I'm glad I wasn't Carl."

"Good night," he said.

As he turned away through the trees, he heard his aunt demanding: "Where on earth have you been, Donna? And Grandpa up there dying. I don't know what you're thinking of."

5

His mother and Carl were in the living room when Alan came to the house. They were sitting there in a restless quiet, with the strained feel of Grandpa's dying tense about them. They wondered where Alan could have been, but they were too occupied to press the point when he answered vaguely. He sat there for a time answering other questions about his journey. Carl complained briefly at being away from his ship. He had had a berth only since June, and now he was missing a trip in August. In these seasons, with half the boats on the lakes laid up, it was a man's business to keep his berth when he had one.

"But Grandpa is dying," his mother said, and there was the Bradley note in her voice. It was strange, Alan thought, how thoroughly the Bradley wives assumed the rôle.

Carl said nothing, but his face was set. It was a dark strong face, stubborn and impassive. He never showed his emotions, his life was beneath the surface. And that was true of all the Sletters. They were capable of earnest feeling, but their life was hidden. Speech was not easy for them; they rarely showed their feelings. Now Alan had returned, and it was natural that they should accept him quietly after three years' absence. Tomorrow, and next week, and next year, they would ask the questions, casually

and one at a time, that another family would have asked tonight. That had been his father's way, speaking little, thinking in his own mind, going ahead with what waited to be done, loving and hating with a deep silent ardor. It had been his father's way, and his mother had early come to accept it. It was the instinct of the Sletters.

Once his mother went to the door and looked through the trees toward the Homestead. "It's dark now, all but Grandpa's room," she said. "I suppose the doctor will stay there. If there's any need, they'll call us." She turned to Alan. "You must be tired, son. You look worn out."

Alan coughed, and her strong lined face showed a kind of hesitant anxiety. "Do you feel all right, Alan?"

"Tired, mother. All last night on the bus."

"Well, you need sleep, of course. Your room is all ready. I've turned the bed down."

"Thanks, mother." He bent slightly, and gave her a shy kiss on the forehead. "Good night."

"Good night, son. It's good to have you back." There was a suppressed eagerness in her voice. Those few words were as near as she could ever come to saying what some mothers might find so easy. But the rest was in her face, strong and patient and earnest, and her eyes were filled with light.

Her face was evidence enough that life would never find her wanting—in courage, or hardihood, or faith. She lived on the essential things, and wherever she was, there would be a presence and consciousness of them. Wherever she was, there would be order—order of the heart and mind as well as of the house; for she lived an ordered life. And there

would be the beauty and the gratefulness of simple things. Now it seemed to Alan that she brought him far and moving memories, of food on a cold night, of fire when the wind was outside, and of the warmth and certainty that are in the heart and that make the only lasting provision.

As he climbed the stairs Alan reflected on the discoveries that absence and return make possible. He could see the past very clearly now. After a few hours by the Bradley shore and a few minutes in the living room he had known all his boyhood, he knew himself better than ever before. He knew why reticence fitted him, and why his strength was hidden beneath the surface, not to be seen or surmised by others, but there to draw upon when life demanded. He knew his mother and his brother better, and he knew why his father had walked with such a solid step and managed a team with hands so certain. They were Sletters, and now he felt a pride in remembering the old daguerreotype of his grandmother, with her eyes so frank and her girlish mouth strong and quiet. Not somberness, for there was life in those features, and Alan could remember his father laughing like a boy till the tears ran down his face while he told the story of Sylvester Hollis and the mule he had traded for at Pride's Crossing forty years ago. They were not somber, but their life was beneath the surface. They were not touched by little things, and they never had quick or small emotions.

Coming home to find his memories waiting, and feeling the old familiar past where he belonged, made him sure of himself in an unaccustomed way. It was a kind of revelation,

a way of putting life together. Now he began to know why he had felt so earnest and thoughtful that evening on the arched bridge over the Tweed at Melrose, with the red hillsides freshly plowed and the green slopes dipping to the water and the great mass of the Cheviots dark with dusk. He understood why the smoky columns of Euston Station filled him with a melancholy and exhilaration, and why the coasts of America, dim and far and low upon the sea, made him proud and sad and a little troubled. It was a long pilgrimage his blood had come by, and there was a union of Scottish hillsides and dark Danish fields that haunted his mind's memory. He came of people who do not easily forget, who live earnestly and carry the marks of their experience where no eye can see.

And so he knew at last what brought him back to the lake. It was not for love of it that he walked thoughtfully across his grandfather's land, but for something else. You might say destiny, and that would do. Here was the place where he had grown, and his father before him, their life drawing from it; and there wasn't any other place in the world where they could have a sense like this. All the rest was change and going; here they had come from. This was their nurture and beginning in America, and, though they might not know it, his children and grandchildren would still come from here. Some time, many years away, Alan could see a strong young Bradley, with the wide Bradley eyes and the sober mouth, standing in this field and wondering why it seemed unlike any other place in the world, and what it was beyond quiet and darkness that spoke to him there.

6

He lay in bed and he could not sleep. Home-coming, with the serenity of return, but with a restlessness too. He coughed quietly, and his mind was crowded with memories. As he lay there by the window he thought of spring nights in his boyhood when he had slept with the wind hurrying over and the lake loud in the darkness. He began to think of his half-cousin, Donna, and the words they had spoken. History, he had said. History. Yes, this was history. And while he lay there waiting for sleep his mind was haunted with a dim far sense of all the years of the Homestead on that shore. . . .

II

The Homestead

I

It was June of 1865 when young Roger Bradley came north through Ohio, looking for homestead acres. He was a boy with a man's rangy body and a man's hardened lines in his weather-beaten face. The searing days at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, the campaigns in the wilderness had done that. He would never be a boy again; he would always have that rocklike hardness in his face, and he would always carry his left arm stiffly because a Rebel bullet had chipped the elbow bone. He was not yet twenty-two; but he talked like a man in a set slow voice, and he didn't smile often.

It was just three years since he had gone to join General Burnside's forces at South Mountain, leaving his mother and his bachelor uncle in the sleepy little Pennsylvania village beyond Williamstown. Since then his mother had died and he had seen the maimed men lying in the brambles on the slope of Kenesaw Mountain and he had pulled his trigger hard when the gray-clad men rushed on their lines, and he was not the same. To go North now, after Appomattox, to get away from those trampled army camps and fields where forms lay in a wretched stillness and the grass was black with blood. To get beyond the sound of southern voices with

the twisting nasal drawl and away from faces heavy with the waiting and the weariness of war.

He went North, and it was not enough to cross the Ohio and see the busy life of peace in the streets of Marietta. He was bound for the northernmost edge of Ohio, to Ocean County, where the windy water of Lake Erie washed the quiet land. Ocean County . . . the very name was ample, full of space and light. So he pressed on toward the new land, following the Muskingum, walking in the ruts of the old Indian trail to Fort Hasker. Flatboats passed him on the river, and seeing the faded blue, not quite anonymous with dust and travel, a figure would shout occasionally to him from the boats. At night he built his campfire in a thicket by some quiet pool of the river. After the half-mad bivouacs in the Wilderness he wondered in the long twilight at the quiet and the mystery of evening. For it was June, and the dark came late. At last stars shone in the still water, and he heard the stream's murmur even in his sleep.

So he passed through many miles of farming land, fine land with broad valleys running up to rounded hills, and he crossed many rivers coming down to the Muskingum. There had been a long wet spring, and the meadows all were green and the gullies ran with sweet cool water tasting of rocks and roots and the faint good iron flavors of deep earth. Often he paused in the noon sun to lie in the solid shade of oak groves by a stream's tinkle, and there he opened his knapsack and ate his bread and cheese, washing it down with drafts of running water, lying on his belly and drinking with his face in the stream.

Sometimes he passed farmers in the fields. Seeing his

black campaign hat and his camp-stained clothes, a man might leave his plow idle in the furrow and talk in ringing northern words.

"You're one of Grant's men. Where you heading?"

"North," he would say. "They tell me there's good land opened up along Lake Erie."

"Don't know about that. But it's a long ways, and I guess there's land all right. Better stop here till morning."

They were friendly, these northern farmers. Some of them had sons in Grant's army who had not yet come home. And some had sons in Grant's army who would never come home. They asked a hundred questions about the Wilderness and Appomattox, and Roger Bradley answered with a set face and in monosyllables. But farming—his eyes lighted when the talk dwelt on the yield of Ohio corn and the breeds of stock coming into the region—Guernseys, Holsteins, Berkshires, Chesters, Poland-Chinas—and the fattening of hogs and the pasturing of sheep. This talk loosed his tongue and brought almost a boyish eagerness into his face. At night, when he spread his gray blanket on the floor and asked no other bed, he lay broad awake with his mind busy, and what he pictured was level acres and fine cattle and a tight barn where horses munched hay in the quiet night.

Through Zanesville he passed, where the Licking River joined the Muskingum. He felt a kind of pride in the solid town with its brick buildings and its wide streets bridging the rivers. Above the town stood the sandstone hills with their naked ledges showing; their clay slopes made the Licking run yellow after rain. Now he understood the far

red glow he had seen on the hills at night—the great brick ovens burning.

When an evening rainstorm caught him in Pleasant Valley, he turned to an inn for shelter. His cot was in the common bedroom on the second floor, and his meal he ate at the family table in the big dining room below. Afterward, while the summer rain drummed on the roof, he sat with the landlord and a red-faced Albany merchant smoking pipefuls of Kentucky burley and talking about the new railroad that was striking through to the north.

"There's good rail connections along Lake Erie," said the merchant. "What we need now is a line down through this country to join Lake Erie with the Ohio."

"That's right," the landlord put in. "They've got it over in the western part of the state, the Mad River and Lake Erie Line, and it's time we had one here. Of course," he added, "we've got the canal."

The merchant sucked a light into a black cigar and spoke through the fresh blue haze. "The canal's all right. I remember when they dug the thing. I still know some of the Irishmen that worked in the gangs. Sixty cents a day and a jigger of whisky they got for putting that ditch through." He hitched himself in his chair and blew out a fresh cloud of smoke. "But this is 1865. We're ready for something faster now. It takes a week to get a boat up the Ohio canal. When the railroad's finished it won't be a day from the river all the way to Cleveland. I tell you this country is just beginning."

He spoke in a heavy and conclusive voice, nodding his red face and pointing with his cigar. It left fading blue exclama-

tion points in the air. There wasn't any dreaming in his eyes, and his voice had only a kind of quarrelsome impatience because the future was not the present. But his words were eloquent to Roger Bradley. The gray eyes, narrowed with that grimness of the campaigns, began to blaze deeply. His mind filled with pictures of that northern land where the fields ran level to the sky and the rich black acres waited to be broken.

When his thoughts came back again, the Albany man was saying: "New York State's all right, but I'll bank on Ohio. They do things different out here. Take down in Highland County, two towns wanted to be the county seat and they settled it by a fist fight out in front of everybody. The champions of the two towns had a rough-and-tumble on the town green. When they finished, the Hillsboro man was on his feet and the other man was down. So Hillsboro got the courthouse." He tossed the stub of his cigar into a spittoon. "That's the way they do things in Ohio."

All night, while the red-faced merchant snored up at the studded ceiling, Roger dreamed of broad northern fields and a blue morning haze over forests of oak and chestnut. At dawn, while the merchant lay wide-mouthed in sleep, he carried his knapsack down to the pump in the innyard. He plunged his face into a tub of cold water and shaved by the reflection of the rising sun on a window pane. After a breakfast of cornbread and smoking sausages, he threw his knapsack on his shoulders and swung northward. The future was in his step.

For two days he followed the National Road west through Licking and Franklin counties. The broad road, scarred

deep with the ruts of iron-shod wagons and pitted with the marks of drovers' herds, had an excitement for him. His stride grew longer. On this highroad through Ohio's heart there was a sense of life flowing into new regions; he was not alone, but one of many seeking a new beginning in a new place; for this was a trail of many migrations.

Straight through the fields it ran, and over the land rising almost imperceptibly toward the sunset, the rivers running off eastward and a sense of a western horizon lifted and promising; straight through the Ohio forests of beech and hickory and walnut. In places where the ground was still bottomless with spring rains, the road was a rugged puncheon pavement, a broad log causeway with the big trunks of forest trees laid across; and in the forest shade the logs were dark and still quick with life where iron-rimmed wheels had cut through the cinnamon bark to the white sapwood beneath. Now he walked on the balls of his feet, springing across the road's rugged ribbing, leaping lightly over the roughness and the gaps in the causeway. After midday the western horizon was bathed in a strong light, and in the long June evening the sky was radiant with color.

At the junction of the Scioto and the Whetstone (though the white man's name was less enduring than the Indian "Olentangy") the town of Columbus was spreading over the flat prairie lands. Through the dust of Broad Street there passed an endless train of wagons, mules, and horsemen. Long-springed four-horse stages, with two drivers swaying on the high seat, rattled through four times a day, and the fine white dust coated the buckeye trees that lined the road.

Roger Bradley heard accounts of thriving towns in all directions: Lancaster, settled in the hills a day's ride south, peopled by Pennsylvania Dutch joined by Württembergers and some Swiss—a thrifty flourishing town with its cotton spinning mill and a big steam flour mill, and a market every Wednesday and Saturday; Magnetic Springs and Delaware in the fine orchard lands to the north; Berlin with its colony of German settlers and its weekly German newspaper; Mt. Gilead with its pious friendly settlement; and Mt. Vernon and Mansfield and Wooster on the way to the growing city of Cleveland.

But it was due north to the newly opened lands in Ocean County that Roger Bradley journeyed. He already knew in his mind just what place he wanted. He had a vision of it: broad acres above the blue sweep of Lake Erie. He would sow the land in corn and rye and wheat; when the wind blew on his spring grain, green waves would run over his field like the blue waves of the lake beyond. Many labors might be required before he realized that vision; but that he should realize it, he never questioned.

When he spoke of lands in Ocean County a Wayne County man tried to dissuade him. "There's nothing left up there but marsh basins. That county has been settled for forty years. A new man don't have a chance. What isn't claimed isn't worth claiming. That whole country was lake bottom once. Now there's nothing left but sour land that won't drain off. And what isn't soggy with water is grown up with brush. You'll never find a farm up there."

Roger looked at the man. He had never meant to find a

farm; he was going to make one. "They're putting drainage ditches through there now," he said.

"Yes, but that don't make a swamp a wheat field. I tell you a new man don't have a chance. Farther west, now, it might be different. I can offer you—"

"No," Roger said. "I've got my mind fixed on Ocean County."

"Well, but you can't have a farm just because you've got your mind fixed on it."

"You can have anything," Roger answered quietly, "if you want it enough."

He stopped long enough in Columbus to ask at the big rambling Statehouse for more exact information about those northern lands. He learned that there were newly drained homesteads of the public domain selling at fifty-three cents an acre, and that the settlement in the northern counties was mostly Yankee—Connecticut families moved west, with a scattering of Danes and Germans among them. The land was producing well: thirty-five bushels of corn to the acre, thirty bushels of oats, eighteen bushels of wheat. The railroad gave access to an unlimited market.

Then he was on the stage road north. Through Richland and Huron counties he found the settlement diminishing; often the road was only a wagon rut over the grassy meadows or a ragged uncertain way cleared through the forest. The farms grew fewer, but the land was pleasing to the eye; and where a field was broken the soil showed rich and dark. Though he had no desire to stop and visit on the way, he met occasional friendly farmers, most of them with a good Yankee manner, and they all had a sound belief in

their region. As he tramped into the north Roger felt that he was coming into his own country.

The land grew wilder. Occasionally he found the fresh cloven tracks of deer in damp places on the road. From the woods came hidden notes of wild turkeys, quail, and partridge. Often he heard a dry and wary chatter, and looking up he saw red and black squirrels peering at him from the trees. One night there sounded, faint and far, the quavering note of wolves. Roger heaped wood on his fire and knew that he was in the new lands at last.

The next day he saw the horizon grow broad and empty, and he felt a new presence in the wind that blew over the flat forest-patched land. His eyes strained and his pace quickened. At the crest of a low ridge he stopped to gaze northward. Beyond a false horizon of distant woods, another horizon spread out east and west, and it was bluer than the sky. That was the end of his journey.

2

A quarter of a section, he bought, and he paid $84.50 for those one hundred sixty acres looking across the blue breadth of Lake Erie. It left him without money to buy his first provisions and his first stock and his first scanty equipment. But a Danish neighbor, established a dozen years before, with a tight frame house and a solid barn for his stock, sold him a mule and a cow on credit. And a thrifty German storekeeper at Pride's Crossing took a mortgage on his acres in return for provisions and tools.

So Roger Bradley walked thoughtfully over his land, and

in his mind it took shape with dwellings and barns and fences—fences on three sides, and on the fourth the lake; and many more than a hundred and sixty acres were circled by the fences that he dreamed. He pictured the house he would some day build, a broad and spacious house with a wide veranda like those he remembered from old towns in Pennsylvania. It would occupy the high ground on the terrace above the lake, and it would look across the sweep of water to the tall blue northern sky. Thus he surveyed his homestead, and while his pride was fresh and the first excitement shone in his eyes, his axe rang in a thicket of hickory and horse chestnut.

For a week he slept on the earth. When he had the walls of his cabin ready, his Danish neighbor, August Sletterhage, came over and helped him raise the roof timbers. Then he moved into the log dwelling with its sides yet unchinked and daylight showing through the roof. His meadow land he plowed and planted in a late sowing of corn and potatoes. He could get through the first winter on these crops, and the wild grass would make a sweet hay for his beasts.

Occasionally the Danish neighbor came through his clearing at dusk. There were other neighbors but they were Yankees, and though they were friendly enough they didn't go out of their way to see how a newcomer was getting started. Perhaps it was because he too was a recent settler that August Sletterhage took such interest in the new homestead. His lean homely face would smile as he swung his thumbs in the straps of his overalls.

"Young fella don't like to go slow." And he gave a warn-

ing shake of his head. "We hear you choppin' before daylight and we see you burnin' brush after night."

Sometimes his daughter Elsa brought cooked dishes, rich meat pies and sweet Danish pastries. She would appear silently, a slender girlish figure under the trees carrying a dish covered with a red-checked cloth.

"Mother sent a bite to eat," she would say as Roger leaned on his hoe or thrust his axe deep into a tree before he straightened. "She thought you would be hungry."

As he looked at this gray-eyed girl with her direct clear glance and her plain face full of quiet strength and a simple confidence, Roger felt somehow strengthened. Not many words passed between them on these meetings, but sometimes their eyes dwelt on each other with gladness. To Roger it was a strange thing; after years of war and a long journey among unfamiliar people, with his vision of the future always secret in his mind, he found in this girl an understanding. He could disclose himself to her. He could reveal his hope and his resolution. Between them was this wordless knowing. Sometimes the sense was strong enough to puzzle and disturb him. Then he took his axe and laid out big white wedges from the base of a tree.

3

In the fall, flaming with rich northern colors, when the beech trees were russet and the maples barred with gold and a far blue haze hung over the lake and the air was rich to breathe, he got in his crops and cut up his cornstalks for fodder. Now he had provision for himself and his beasts.

Already he had pigs foraging in the woods, sound-bodied half-wild creatures living on acorns and pignuts and alder roots. When the snow began to fly they would come in, and he would have a shelter ready and corn enough to feed them through the winter. Now, when the last hard rows were dug, he turned these shotes into his potato field to root out that broken earth. Then, without stopping to mark the season, he went into his brush and began to clear land for spring plowing. He grubbed out small trees by the roots, cut down the larger ones, and set the stumps to burning. The biggest elms and maples he girdled with his axe, cutting through the bark and sapwood, leaving the trees to fall in their time. Over all his land there drifted the sharp sweet haze of brush fires.

So through the fall and the winter he worked, snaking out logs with his mule and a length of chain, sawing and splitting his firewood, clearing out sumac and hazel with his grubbing hoe. His axe rang loud on cold December days. He worked from the first gray light of morning until complete evening darkness, and when he sat by lantern light and ate his plain meal he was already impatient for morning.

"That young Bradley, he never stops," August Sletterhage told his neighbors in Rudolf Hummel's store at Pride's Crossing. "He works all day with his mule, and then he puts his mule in the barn and goes out with a lantern to chop trees. He never gets tired."

It was true. Fatigue Roger Bradley felt, but never that weariness that passes from body to mind. Always his hope was ardent, his spirit restless. It was when his body ached with fatigue that he felt most exultant, as though it was a

triumph he was having in that lonely place. He was on his own land, and he drew strength from it. Sometimes, walking on the hard winter earth, he felt the life waiting in it and he saw its future, rich, fecund, productive. As though a part of that life passed into him he loved the feel of the earth under his feet, and sometimes when he got down on his knees to grub out hazel roots he let the soil sift through his fingers, like a man exulting over treasure.

Occasionally on winter afternoons he took his rifle and shot a wild turkey in the woods. Then he would carry it to Mrs. Sletterhage and she would keep him there for supper.

"Don't say Mrs. Sletterhage," the plump woman said to him one evening. "It's just plain Sletter now." And August, scowling, nodded his head. They had yielded to the ways of a new land and had shortened their name. Originally Slet-ter-hä-ge, in four hard syllables, it had been corrupted by the neighbors to Sletter-häg, and the boys had many a bloody set-to over Sletter-hog, a fighting name. Now August continued to scowl, and he snapped his red suspenders. "Sletterhage, like Copenhagen—it's a good name. But Sletter, the young ones say, is better. So now that's what we go by." He felt violated, but the new generation always has its way.

It was pleasant in Mrs. Sletter's big warm kitchen, filled with the smells of cooking and the good sound of voices. After supper, when the younger children ceased their chatter and climbed upstairs to bed, Roger smoked and talked with August Sletter, and Elsa sat there silent with her gray eyes thoughtful, following all they said.

"It's going to be good land," the older man declared with his pipe fitted into his blunt teeth. "The only trouble to keep this land from being settled was drainage. But now the drainage ditches give us a good soil. No more swamps in Ocean County. And we got a railroad right here at Sandusky. It's going to be good land."

Roger nodded his head quietly; he knew that it was so.

"All it needs is work," August said, and Roger never tired of working.

He had a great patience and a great industry. The land was ready to produce the harvest he had dreamed, and the railroad was there, making a market certain. Sometimes in this first spring when he looked up from the plow trench, the blue furrows of Lake Erie resting his eyes from the endless black furrows, Roger took comfort because the hard years had already gone in this country, and he was grateful that so much was done. Around Pride's Crossing were well built farmhouses with vines growing over their porches, suggesting already a past as well as a permanence. At one time a road had run through his own land, a narrow road with a dead end in Lake Erie. A wooden landing stood there on the shore. For years the early farmers had brought their loaded wagons to meet the weekly packet boat when the inland roads were deep in mire. But now the wharf was idle, the oak timbers slowly withering in sun and wind and rain. Now the freight train whistled over the low fields and a black drift of smoke was left to stratify the sky. Already the first chapter in this place was completed. The prodigious toil and hardship were past. Now the land was fulfilling its promise.

The next summer, when a German farmer decided to move west Roger bought his land for ninety dollars, borrowing part of it from a Sandusky bank. Then he had, just twelve months after his arrival, a half-section, and he worked all the harder. The new land was largely unimproved. Roger crowded new strength into his day. He cleared and turned the unwilling acres. In fifteen months they were carpeted with green young wheat and rye.

4

In the autumn of that second year, on a blue October day of Indian summer, he married Elsa Sletter. He worked all day, only stopping an hour early and shaving and putting on his black broadcloth suit and his black hat. He walked through the woods to his neighbor's house, and when he came back Elsa Bradley was with him. The next morning she made corn pancakes while he fed his fifty ravenous shotes in the hog run. When he came in his eyes were more filled with light than she had ever seen them.

"Roger," she said, and her voice was alive with happiness, "Roger—your breakfast is ready."

He put his hands on her shoulders and looked down into her quiet face. "Elsa, we're going to have the best farm in Ocean County." He sat down and drank a cup of coffee. "Maybe the best in all Ohio." Again his eyes filled with the vision of wide lands within strong fences, of fine herds and capacious barns. And he was not a man for idle dreaming.

With that vision before him he went ahead. His lands grew. He put up a house, hiring carpenters this time from

Norwalk, and he built a barn with spiked lightning-rods studding its ridgepole. He bought the first gang plow and the first horse-drawn hayrake in Ocean County. He drove the first binder in northern Ohio into his ripe wheat field and cut twenty-seven acres of it in a day. The binder came in crates, with a book of directions for putting it together. With bolts and wrenches it was assembled, and it stood there in the barnyard like a circus wagon, its green and red paintwork glinting in the sun; while the old scythe, with its blade honed thin and shallow and its handles smooth and worn, hung from a rafter just inside the barn. Neighbors came to see the binder, and they stayed to see the big new corncribs and the dairy herd and the silos that were going up like two round German towers at the north end of the barn.

There were no stale or sour acres in the Bradley fences. Tirelessly Roger kept them drained and the crops rotated. He worked the land with patience and with feeling, never robbing it of its richness. Along the shore to the east of his house he set out five hundred apple and pear and peach and cherry trees. From mid-April to late May the orchard blossomed. The spring winds were fragrant over all the Homestead acres. The west shore he kept in pasture, preferring to see the grasses waving along all the terrace above the lake. At the pasture's edge he set out a line of hemlocks for a windbreak. The trees took good hold in the sandy soil, and soon he had a line of tented hemlocks ending at the shore. All winter the northeast winds roared in their branches. Around the house he left the grove of trees—the wood lot, he called it—under whose shelter he had slept

while he was building his first cabin. The trees had an unchanging dignity, great arching elms and rustling maples, hickories glowing with pale gold throughout the autumn, and a clump of cedars, darkly thick and sadly beautiful, at the east limit of the grove. In the broad inland fields he grew big crops of wheat and corn and oats and hay. He tried sugar beets and alfalfa, and he experimented with sulphate, phosphate, and tankage fertilizers to keep his soils vital and sweet.

As he prospered, Roger Bradley became known beyond his own fences. In Norwalk and Sandusky and even in Toledo and Cleveland men spoke of a farm that was shipping high-test milk to the big creameries and that was yielding record-breaking crops of fruit and grain.

"How did he do it?" the neighbors asked August Sletter in the store at Pride's Crossing. "Look, he's got four hundred acres now, and he hires eight men at a time to get his grain cut and his hay put up."

August Sletter was pleased to snap his suspenders and speak for his son-in-law. "That young Bradley, he's a smart feller."

How did he do it? By being smart. By thinking a year or five years ahead of his neighbors. By figuring what the new railroad would do to the price of wheat and figuring how much live-weight hogs or cattle would bring in the slaughter-houses at Cleveland and Toledo. But there were other answers, too: By never giving himself a rest. By working summer and winter and grudging all idleness so that he tramped over every acre on Sunday afternoons, keeping an eye on every corner of the place and planning the work for

a week and a month ahead. When other farmers stopped for bad weather, not Roger Bradley. And when other men would have turned the toil over to hired men, not he. He worked with the men, setting a pace that only a good hand could follow. He paid high wages—twenty-five dollars a month when first-class farm hands were glad to get fifteen; but he took three times as much work from his men, and it was a good bargain. He hired only the men who could keep up with his strength, with his broad shoulders and his iron back, with his muscles that had never softened even though the timber was cut and the brush was gone and the fields were strung with tight fences. He worked as though he loved it, and he understood the land and what it could do. He spared his horses, but he never spared himself. "A man can stand more work than a horse," he said, "because a man understands what it's for. A horse has no purpose." So when they were talking about the prosperous young farmer on that half-section by the lake, when the need for struggle was past, Roger Bradley was still working sixteen hours a day.

At first he had hired himself out in busy seasons to other men, better established, to get cash ahead; and it was not cash that he wanted but acres. But even after he was solidly prospering he never took it easy. There were weeks of sweating toil with a hoe in muddy cornfields, fighting down weeds in those black acres when the land was too wet for plowing. A swamp, his field had been once, and it teemed with fertility. It was wild land, ready to throw up a rank growth, and only a wary eye and tireless toil could keep down the older life, furtive and prolific in that black soil.

There were nights of shocking wheat by moonlight, hot July nights when a man might sit under his trees; but Roger Bradley was setting up shocks alone, leaving his wheat bivouacked in that sleeping field.

The bankers in Sandusky and Fremont knew him. They knew his notes were good, and he did not want for credit when an offer came. He was always watching his chance to add broad acres to that homestead on the lake.

He came in one October night, his gray eyes shining. "Elsa, I've just bought the Himber farm. The whole thing. A hundred and sixty acres. All improved and cultivated land."

He watched the light leap in her eyes. "Oh, Roger, you've bought it! A hundred and sixty acres!"

"Yes. Of course it isn't paid for. We'll have to work double-harness to pay it off. But we'll manage."

Elsa only repeated: "A hundred and sixty acres. A hundred and sixty acres." Roger saw his pride repeated in her face.

During these years he was too busy to give much time to Elsa. He was a young man, working to get his acres clear of debt and to add to them while the time was ripe, and she understood. She didn't ask any more than to take her own part, to keep the house going and to bear him sons to manage more acres in the years ahead. She understood. They were builders. Other women in other times might desire attention, change, a relaxing of that clenched hold on purpose. But this was the opportunity America gave them in their time. In no other land, in no other age, was there such a promise. The very air of America in the seventies

held that sense of destiny, of expanding horizon, of sudden bounty and generous offering. In years to come the land would be settled. Every quarter-section would have a sound farmhouse and a solid barn and tight fences strung along its boundary. There would be no reaching out for acres then. All would be established and certain and permanent, or nearly so. But in the seventies the fable of Virginia City and those high gold gulches and silver camps of the Sierras was abroad; it was the golden time even in the draining swamp lands by Lake Erie.

5

After ten years Roger Bradley built his wife a house more fitting to their success. They had prospered, the family was growing, and now they need no longer have a dwelling that was dwarfed by their barns. He called it simply the Homestead, but it was a spacious and impressive house planned by a Cleveland architect and built by carpenters from Sandusky; and it little resembled the homestead cabin he had raised in the woods. It was too large a house for their needs and too fine for Elsa's taste. But it was the house that Roger had dreamed that first night by his campfire, and he built it in a kind of stubbornness and pride. There was the long veranda and wide hall with a handsome stairway, walnut-railed; a big dining room with a hanging lamp over the table, and a living room with a five-foot fireplace between two banks of windows looking on the lake. Upstairs there was a spacious front bedroom and other rooms not much smaller opening from an airy hall. The front bed-

room, he and Elsa occupied. Its bank of windows looked across the grassy terrace to the lake.

The neighbors could see no sense in facing a house north. But Roger had reasons. In the early years, before the railroad came, the lake had been the way to the world. There the crops went to market while the inland roads were deep in mire or drifted with early snow. And though the times had changed, Roger chose to remember what the lake must have been to men in the wilderness, before he ever saw these northern lands. Then the lake was freedom and access. Always it would be light and space. So he built his house to face it, not fronting his doorway south as the snug German farmhouses were fronted, but facing it northwest, into the very heart of winter that swept down from Huron and Superior.

Elsa was proud and thankful for that big frame house looking across Lake Erie; but she never felt entirely at home in it. She was the kind of woman who would always be most grateful for simple things. If she had possessed great wealth and brilliant surrounding, her gratitude would still have been reserved for a hearth fire on a bad night, for food and drink and quiet voices, and her luxuries would still have been the yellow comfort of lamplight when the cold was outside and a warm bed for a tired body at the day's end.

She was a simple woman, as the old daguerreotype showed, with her hair drawn straight back from her fine forehead, her eyes direct and truthful, and her features very plain. But there was something more than simplicity; there was the strength that sadness gives to a face. For her last two children had died at birth, and after the second

mound was raised in the shadow of the cedars by the shore her eyes had a wondering trouble in them, and her voice had a patience that was beautiful but was also sadness. She had borne Roger Bradley three other children, all sons, and that was a proud thing to do, but she couldn't forget the two small graves on the shore.

She could bear great pain in silence, and she could grieve in silence, too. In the last years she had a cough, quiet and shallow, that grew more frequent as her strength wasted. Thirteen summers after he had brought her through the forest path to his log cabin, Roger Bradley watched her die, quietly and simply while the lake sighed on the shore and through the bay window the moonlight fell across her bed.

A great doctor was there from Cleveland. He called it lung fever and shook his head, and Roger Bradley went out to walk in his lake pasture and for once the richness was gone from his land. He stood there in the still white rain of moonlight, not hearing the patient wash of waves below. He walked back to the house and slowly climbed the stairs and stood there looking at the quiet figure in the moonlight. Then he went to the barn and with a lighted lantern he began mending harness. When he finished he had sewed the wrong strap to a hame-trace, and he couldn't see to take the stitches out, for the straight girlish figure that came between, a slender girlish figure standing at the edge of the clearing and holding a covered dish in her hands.

At last daylight sickened the yellow glow of his lantern and he went again to the house. One call brought the three boys down.

"Peder! Jonas! Timothy!"

They came to him in the kitchen, rubbing their sleepy eyes.

"Your mother died last night."

The boys looked up at their father with eyes suddenly wide. Peder half turned toward his mother's bedroom, and his breath stopped in his throat. Jonas' lips were trembling. Timothy fumbled at his brother's shoulder, and his eyes were terrified.

Roger couldn't face the stricken realization in their eyes and he knew he couldn't stand the cry that would break in their voices. He looked helplessly around the room, and then he saw the milk pail on the stand.

"Chores," he said, and he started for the barn. The boys followed him, their faces struggling with the realization, their gray eyes haunted and bewildered. But chores were waiting to be done. Grief and loss and loneliness didn't alter them. They went on in their relentless need—feeding and milking and cleaning stables—and so Roger Bradley walked solidly across the barnyard with the milk pail at his side. The boys followed him, huddling close together, treading almost on their father's heels. Something tugged at them from the house where their mother must be lying in such a quiet; and something drew them after their father, suddenly some blind and terrible dependence. So the Bradleys filed across the barnyard while the chickens scurried hungrily after them and the gaunt young turkeys pecked ineptly at their feet, and inside the stable the animals tossed their heads, impatient for their feeding.

There was a curious heroism in that procession. It was

the heroism of man's heart put sternly by while the old tasks were resumed. Even now, while they watered the animals with dazed eyes and threw down hay with numb habitual movements, the enormous truth was driving through them: a presence that had been a part of life was gone; a voice and an affection that had been their earliest memory was no longer in the world; a face that had been the center of their life was empty now and would soon be hid away. It was incredible that life was so uncertain. Incredible, impossible, but simply, sternly so. It would have been easier to believe that all Lake Erie had vanished in a night. But the broad morning-radiant water was unchanged; it lay in great peace, tranquil and luminous under the sky. The sterner, harder fact was that one face, one voice, one presence was no longer theirs.

The hired men had come from the tenant house and were driving the cows into the stable. While Roger waited with his milking stool he looked at his sons. Their faces were numb with bewilderment. He knew that they would soon be shaken. They would turn to him, and he could not help them. Could the world be so uncertain, then? Could life be so little availing that all its clenched rebellion could not alter what had happened in that quiet bedroom quietly, on a moonlit summer night? He looked away from his sons, his own face fixed like theirs. And while they fought in silence that oldest struggle of the heart and made the heart's old slow surrender, the chores were done once more.

Years later, when there was a new mistress in the Homestead, Roger Bradley remembered with a wondering sadness, and he saw how universal is the sweeping up the house

and putting life in order, a new order, slightly, while in the heart is the still bitter crying.

6

In the next seasons he worked harder, and his growing sons worked with him. On fine Sundays they stood quietly by the new mound under the cedars. Roger had bought three stones, two small unmarked stones for the infant children and a plain stone, plain and simple and in its way beautiful, like Elsa herself, and on the stone was simply the name *Elsa Bradley.*

For two years there was many an evening when Roger felt lonely in the lamplight. A man could work all day, but at night he had to surrender. Supper was the hardest time. Hulda carried in the apple pudding and filled their coffee cups, and Roger looked at his growing boys and there was an emptiness at the table. The boys were distant from him. They did men's work and they were men perhaps, but not as their father was. His sternness, his strength, his memory and his loneliness would always make them boys in his presence.

Sundays were long days, and Sunday evening was the worst hour of the week. Especially in the autumn when the year's work was done. November brought its early dark and its need for something that the household did not contain. The fields were lonely now. Roger looked out the window, but the darkness made only an uncertain land, lifeless and still. The autumn fields took that melancholy so quietly. Even the lake. He listened. There was a low note,

a droning that had darkness in it. The lake, too, knew this season.

That winter he began adding to his house. It puzzled the boys, and they could only put it down to restlessness. Roger never discussed it with them, but frequently a new corps of workmen arrived from Sandusky and the sounds of hammer and saw rang in the winter air. He added a south wing to the Homestead and built a paneled study room with walls of knotty pine. He extended the veranda around three sides of the house. He widened the hall and tore out the stairs to build a broader staircase, cream-colored with a cherry rail. When the work was done, new furniture began to arrive from Cleveland. A great mahogany clock as tall as a man took its place at the head of the stairway, a maple suite went into the large front bedroom, a new dining-room set of dark fine-grained oak replaced the old drop-leaf table —until the boys felt uneasy in their own house.

When the spring came, Roger made a journey. It was early March, before the spring work began. He was gone three weeks, and when he returned he brought a new wife with him.

For Roger Bradley it was no wedding journey. A man takes only one wedding trip and that is with the bride who is to be the mistress of his first house. He may be married a second time, and a third, but he never sets out again with that grave wondering in his eyes. For Roger Bradley this was an errand. He had gone to Cleveland in the slack March season to bring a new wife home. And he was bringing her.

They boarded the train at Cleveland in a March snow-

storm, and when they stepped off at Pride's Crossing the roads were white and around the light on the lonely station platform the snow fell in soft feathers. Roger had a team and a closed buggy waiting with no one about. They drove into the vague darkness, breaking a soft destruction in the snow-smooth road. The horses' hoofs were muted from the frozen ground.

The new bride was Grace Murdock. She was a beauty and a fine woman and her father was the biggest grain merchant in Cleveland. She peered out at the white empty road and she looked at the silent man beside her.

"How far is it, Roger? Are we near?"

"Three miles yet."

She began to be confused and uncertain, and for the first time she questioned her marriage. This man, her husband, had seemed very solid and substantial in her father's house in Cleveland. And in the hotel, and on the train in the diner, with the rich fragrance of cigar smoke about him and his gray eyes alive with the excitement of a new bride. But when they had stepped down at the dim railway station it was different. He was like another man as soon as the frozen Ocean County earth was under his feet. He seemed to retreat from her.

She asked about the sons, about the buggy waiting at the station. He explained that he had had it left for them. She wouldn't meet the boys until they reached the house. He explained that, and then he spoke to the horses. While they drove through the March snow, with the land vague and cold around them, he was silent like those frozen fields.

The boys were nearly full-grown now. They did men's work in the fields, and they were old enough to be sullen at their father's new marriage and suspicious of the woman whom he brought to take their mother's place. They met her silently, and when the meeting was over she turned to her husband.

"Oh, Roger! I hope they'll like me."

"Of course they will, dear. Come, I want you to see the house. It's all rebuilt for you, you know."

That night Roger announced that he had a present for her.

Her eyes lighted for the first time since her arrival; she was a woman who needed chivalry. "A present! What is it, Roger? May I have it now?"

"No, not until morning."

"But you'll tell me what it is."

"No. It's to be a surprise."

"Oh, Roger, you are good to me."

In the morning he pointed out the broad bay window. "There is your present, dear."

She stood at his side in her silk dressing gown and followed his pointing. "What is it, Roger? I don't see."

He swept his hand across a semicircle of snow-covered land. "There, beyond the hedge-line. One hundred acres of the richest land in Ocean County. I've just added it to the farm. It's in your name."

"Well. . . . I am surprised. I hadn't expected— Thank you, Roger."

She kissed him, but suddenly in her kiss Roger knew that no other woman would feel about this land what he felt.

His eyes went to the white mound by the cedars, and he was lonely.

7

In the twenty years that his new wife lived, Roger Bradley prospered. Prize herds of Holsteins and Shropshires grazed in his pastures; his corn and wheat went to many fairs and brought back blue ribbons to hang in the paneled study room of the Homestead. He bought the first new McCormick reaper in Ohio, and the farmers came from miles around to watch the glossy team of blacks, prancing gently, make the first round of the sixty-acre wheatfield. Roger himself sat in the spring seat, and the three Bradley boys followed the first swath around the golden field.

But the three boys, with the clear eyes of their mother and her curious straight mouth, like a child's mouth but with a strange strength added, never felt very close to their father. They followed his bidding at managing the big farm, and occasionally he went with them to the fields, and they were contented enough at that. The trouble was not in the fields. It was in the house. There the three simple Sletter boys felt uneasy. For Grace Murdock made the place unlike a farmhouse. She filled it with velvet furniture and pictures set in massive frames. She sent to Cleveland for inlaid tables and heavy draperies, and she moved among these things like a woman of quality. Often her friends came to visit. They sat in the long living room with its bank of windows looking to the wind-broken waters beyond the

terrace. They talked till after midnight and stayed in the guest bedrooms till nearly noon. Gradually they made the house their own, filling it with the smoke of fine cigars and the sound of cultivated voices. They talked of hotels and theaters and concerts, of banks and mines and railroad bonds; and they left the living room full of unfamiliar names—Adah Isaacs Menken and Sarah Bernhardt, Mesabi and Bessemer, Andrew Carnegie and Mark Hanna and Whitelaw Reid, Charles Egbert Craddock and Henry George and Edward Bellamy. Their voices were easy in a way that kept the Sletter boys in the stable.

Roger enjoyed their company. He was a gentleman farmer now. He wore a morning coat and a stiff shirt with pearl buttons. With his graying hair and his fine lean face he looked very handsome at the head of the dinner table where the candlelight flashed on his pearl studs. He was a successful man, and he enjoyed entertaining the merchants and bankers of Cleveland. He kept a fancy team and a new high-springed surrey to meet their trains—these Cleveland men dressed in black with stand-up collars and women in sprigged muslins and linen prints. But the Sletter boys still wore overalls and felt uneasy in their Sunday serge.

Peder was the oldest of the boys, and the most thoughtful. Often he felt troubled, remembering his own mother sitting in the worn kitchen podding peas in a wooden bowl, when he saw this other wife of his father's sitting in a wing chair, her ringed fingers quietly busy at a length of bright crewelwork. He remembered his own mother hoeing potatoes in a man's cast-off straw hat, her bare arms brown with sun, the sweat stains darkening her dress. And on

August afternoons this fine woman in a gown of black lace with a waterfall of white sat with her children at a table under the trees drinking tall glasses of lemonade and looking across the parklike terrace to the blue water.

For she had borne Roger Bradley four children—Sterling, Rosemary, Kirkwall, and Ursula. They were not like the Sletter boys; they were fine children with fine names, and their father was not the man who lived in a homestead cabin and worked night and day to get his acres clear of debt. Yet they were Bradleys, like Peder and Jonas and Timothy. They had the Bradley wide-set eyes and the straight sober mouth that spoke without speaking and declared simply that they would get what they set their hearts upon. They surprised their mother.

On an August day when Sterling, the oldest, was eight years old, he looked over the lake and wished for a birthday present.

"What do you want?" his mother asked. "You know you had presents this morning."

The child wanted a sailboat like the sloop he saw leaning in the wind out there. Grace told him he could not have such a thing. It would not be safe. A boy couldn't have a boat like that.

"Yes, I can," said Sterling. "I can have it."

"Why do you say that, son, when I told you no?"

The child looked up at her and said quietly, "You can have anything, if you want it enough."

She looked at her son in surprise and wonder, and suddenly she remembered the quiet way that Roger Bradley had come to her father's house and the quiet unsurprised way

he had taken her from Euclid Avenue to these broad fields of Ocean County.

With the Murdock children growing up, taking music lessons on a grand piano that cost more than Roger had paid for his first three hundred acres, the big house seemed even less like home to the Sletter boys. Even their father seemed more distant as the new children came on. They were uneasy and they felt vaguely dispossessed, but they were not restless. There was too much of the steadfast strain in them. They were loyal to the place and the land and the life where they belonged. Even when Timothy, the youngest of them, began to get the western fever, it was not restlessness but the sense of opportunity that impelled him.

Peder was the first to marry. He chose a simple girl like his mother, a girl from one of the fruit farms back on the Pompton turnpike. Roger was happy to see his first son married, and he built them a house an eighth of a mile down the shore, with the hemlock windbreak between it and the Homestead. There Peder brought his bride to live, and he seldom had need to visit the big house. His brothers, Jonas and Timothy, learned to spend their idle time in his living room, and they withdrew more and more from their father's roof. Soon Jonas followed Peder's example, marrying in a girl from Pride's Crossing. Roger built him a house beyond Peder's, and he had the site chosen for a third dwelling when Timothy should be ready. But Timothy was thinking of other things. At last he bade his father goodbye. "I'm going to try the West," he said. "There's a lot to do out there. . . . Mining and lumber and cattle-raising.

I want to try my luck in Arizona or Nevada." Roger gave him a thousand dollars and stood alone on the station platform while the train streamed away toward Chicago.

That was a fragrant day in spring, and four months later the accident happened to Ursula.

8

Ursula was eight years old, a beautiful child with yellow curls and the bright blue eyes of a doll. She had a new kitten, Jo-Jo, a Persian kitten that a Cleveland lawyer brought when he came to visit. The kitten matched Ursula's hair, and it nestled for hours in the child's arms, purring there in utter peace. Sometimes Ursula took it down to the shore, and there one day after a high surf had thrown some lake trout on the sand, Jo-Jo learned the exciting smell of fish and the most delectable taste in the feline world. After that the kitten haunted the shore, scouring the sand for fishbones.

On that bright August morning Ursula ran along the rim of the terrace, her yellow curls flying in the wind, her blue eyes anxious. "Where's Jo-Jo?" she asked, and Sterling, her brother, bent over a rowboat he was calking on the beach, said over his shoulder: "He went down the shore—down the pasture way."

Ursula hurried. When she came to the horse pasture she crawled through the wires and raced on, looking always over the sand bank for her kitten. "Jo-Jo!" she cried. "Jo-Jo!" And now the tears streamed down her face. Was Jo-Jo lost forever?

The stallion might not have been startled, but at that moment Peder was coming through the gate. Then there were figures on both sides of him and the animal blew loudly through his nostrils. Peder didn't see the yellow-haired Ursula until the stallion was racing toward her.

Ursula heard her half-brother's voice, but perhaps she didn't catch his warning. Peder cried again. And this time he was throwing something. Then there were the swift hoofs pounding, and it was too late. Peder was running toward her, his eyes terrified, and his voice rose to turn the animal away. But the stallion did not stop.

Roger Bradley heard his son's voice lifted. Peder had a quiet voice, and Roger came quickly, knowing some dire thing had happened. But when he stood there he was not prepared. She was his youngest, the last child of them all, and now that golden hair was running red. The blue child-eyes lay open glassily, the doll-like face was waxen.

Peder held her in his arms, and Roger stood there staring. "I'll take her to the house," Peder said. His voice was quiet now.

Roger took a step after him. Then he came to his senses. "I'll send for the doctor." And he was off toward the barn.

The doctor came, Dr. Sanner from Sandusky. Then Dr. Brentham from Cleveland, and the two of them worked over the blood-black golden hair. They sewed the scalp together and took the pulse and stood by to keep the small heart beating.

In the hall, waiting at the closed door, not looking at each other, were Roger and his wife. The children came in quietly and tiptoed out again with anxious faces. But

Sterling stood in the door. "He did it. Peder did it," he repeated in a dead low voice. "He scared the stallion."

Grace's eyes grew wide. "Peder—"

But Roger silenced her. "Don't, Grace." He raised his eyes to the boy. "Don't stand there, Sterling. Go outside now." He turned back to Grace. "You must sit down, dear."

Grace shrank against the closed door. "No, I can't. I must stay here."

"I'll bring a chair," Roger said. He kept his hand on her shoulder while she sat there. He felt her body tremble, and he knew she was straining to hear the doctor's movements.

"They'll do everything," he said. "We can only wait."

At last Sterling came in again. He carried in his arms a yellow fluff, mangled and stained dark with blood. He stood there before his father. "Jo-Jo," he said.

Roger stared silently.

"Peder's dog," the boy said. "I saw him come from the beach with blood on his muzzle."

Roger heard the swift gasp beside him, and he saw the haunted eyes grow wide again. Her voice was tense and breaking. "Jo-Jo," she said. "Jo-Jo." She stared at the mangled yellow form in Sterling's arms.

Roger motioned him away. "Don't give up, dear. We must be patient. The doctors will tell us soon."

After three hours they came out. Roger stood there like a man awaiting sentence, and his beautiful wife stood at his side. The children were huddled near.

"She is living," Dr. Brentham said. "She has a chance to recover."

Roger Bradley's arm went about his wife's shoulder.

"Can we take her home?" Grace Bradley asked.

"No. Her skull is crushed. She can't be moved for days. Weeks possibly. She must stay here."

Peder stepped up. He was in his overalls and he held his mashed felt hat, stained with mud and sweat and cow hairs, in his hand.

"She can stay here," he said earnestly. "We'll make everything comfortable. We'll take care of her."

Then something gave way in Grace Bradley. A sob shook her throat and wrenched her shoulders. "I don't want her here," she cried. "He did it. Peder did it. He drove the horse at her! He did, I know he did!"

"Grace," Roger said sternly. "Don't talk that way."

"He did. He's never liked me. He hates my children. I know he did it!"

Her voice broke into a wild sobbing, and Roger led her out of the house. The three children looked back with hate growing dark in their eyes. Peder stood there blankly until his wife came to him.

His eyes followed them out the door. "I did it?" he repeated in a dazed question. Irma tugged at his arm.

"Don't mind her, Peder."

Then he turned to face her. "Irma, I tried to save her."

"Of course you did, Peder."

But the dazed look remained in his eyes. He went to the kitchen and sat down for a while, staring out of the window toward the pasture lot. When he went out he carried his rifle and he walked solidly to the pasture gate. Irma heard a shot, and she knew how heavy that gun had been in Peder's hands. He came in, silently, and put the gun on the rack behind the kitchen door.

"My prize stallion," he said, looking at the empty pasture. "Best blood in Ocean County."

"It was the right thing," Irma said. "The only thing."

9

For three weeks Ursula lay in Peder's bedroom. He and Irma moved upstairs, and they put an extra cot by the bed where the child lay so that Grace Bradley could stay there day and night. For three weeks Peder came to the door each morning and evening to ask for the child. If the doctor was there, he answered, or the nurse answered, for a nurse had come from Cleveland. Grace Bradley answered no word to Peder's inquiry, and her eyes never met his.

Slowly the child gained, and the doctors spoke hopefully of her. A specialist came from New York, Dr. Beckman, and it was he who said early in September: "She will be conscious before long now. And she is stronger every day. If you want to move her, that will be all right."

So, on a small bed Ursula was carried through the woods and along the terrace and into the Homestead. They laid her in her mother's high bed with the bank of windows flooding the room with slanting western light. There her brothers and sisters came to look at her. They stood silently together, Sterling rigid and tall, Kirkwall, wondering, Rosemary, anxious and proud as she looked at her doll-like sister. Ursula's golden hair lay strewn on the pillow. The bandage was almost hidden, for her mother had brushed the hair out, framing the flushed child face. The color had been back in her cheeks for days.

"She will get well, won't she, mother?" Rosemary said.

"Yes. The doctor says she's out of danger now."

"Why doesn't she open her eyes, then?"

"It takes so long to get over the shock, you see. She's resting."

"Resting all these weeks?"

"Yes, dear. But she'll be conscious soon. Then she'll open her eyes and speak to us."

As she spoke, Ursula moved. Her small figure tensed and stirred in the bed, and a hand went to her face. Then the blue eyes opened. They opened wide and clear, and Grace Bradley was on her knees at the bedside.

"Ursula," she said. "Ursula. We're all waiting for you, see?"

The child looked beyond her mother's face. "Where's Jo-Jo?" she asked.

"We're all here with you, darling."

"Where's Jo-Jo?" the child repeated.

Slowly they came to realize it. The blank light, that searching stare, had come to stay in Ursula's eyes. And Jo-Jo was the only burden that her mind could bear.

One day Roger walked down the shore to find Peder, and Peder took a spade and went off behind the barn. When he came back he was carrying a packing case and he went directly to the Homestead. He saw the cold black hatred in the children's faces as he waited outside for his father. Then the two of them looked into the packing case briefly and said some quiet words. In a slow silent earnestness they went to the barn and got a spade, and then they walked on to the cedar thicket at the edge of the grove.

In a little while Roger was back in the Homestead, talk-

ing secretly with Grace. She called the children. "You stay here with father. I'll get Ursula. Father has buried Jo-Jo out by the cedars. We're all going out together."

She came down with Ursula, the child walking in quiet emptiness at her mother's side. In silence they all passed under the autumn trees, and in silence they all stood by the cedars. A small mound of earth was heaped there freshly, and the sod was packed around it. Roger nodded to his wife.

"Children," Grace said quietly, and there was a poignant beauty, a small hope, and a great sadness in her face and in her voice: "Your father has made a grave for Jo-Jo. Now he is buried here in the quiet by the cedar trees."

She knelt beside the youngest, her arm about the child's waist, her face looking into Ursula's doll-like face. "Do you understand, Ursula? Jo-Jo died. And now he's buried here, right here under the grass, here where the earth has been dug open. Jo-Jo is lying here. We'll always know Jo-Jo is all right because he is here by the cedars. Do you understand, darling?"

Ursula looked into her mother's face, her eyes so large and her yellow hair falling to her shoulders in doll-like curls. The bandage was gone from her head, and there was no sign of her illness.

Grace repeated once more. "Do you see, darling? Jo-Jo is buried here."

Then she turned to her husband with a silent look of hope, fear, questioning.

"Shall we go back now, Roger?"

Silently they walked back under the trees, the children

going thougthfully ahead, Grace and Roger walking with uncertain faces and Ursula between them. When they reached the house, Ursula looked up with her eyes entreating.

"Where's Jo-Jo?" she asked.

Grace sobbed, and raised a white hand to her face, and Roger caught her as she fell. He carried her into the house and up the broad staircase and laid her on the bed beside the bank of windows. He sent the Swedish maid for smelling salts. When Grace opened her eyes there was pain and terror in them.

"She'll never get better, Roger. She'll never get better."

"Now, dear. Don't say that."

"But it's true. She hasn't any mind left. She can't learn. She can't understand."

"It's too soon to know yet. The shock—you know, it takes time to wear off. A child, particularly. There's lots of hope yet. The doctors say so."

"No. I don't believe it. I can't believe it. Oh, Roger, it kills me to hope like this, and then see—"

"But we have to hope, dear."

"No, no. I can't. I won't. I mustn't hope that way—not when I know." Her voice was rising and her hands were working. "I can't. You mustn't let me. It will kill me. I mustn't do it, I tell you. I mustn't!"

Her voice was broken with sobs, and Roger had to hold her arms to keep her still.

"Grace," he said sternly. "You have the others to think of. And me. You mustn't let go this way."

Her throat swelled and her voice was a raised cry:

"Ursula, Ursula! She's my baby. You understand? My baby! She's only a baby. It can't happen to her. Ursula —oh, my baby!"

Hulda came to the door in alarm. Roger looked over his shoulder. "Tell the boys to get the doctor. Hurry, Hulda."

After that Grace Bradley was never strong again. She was still young, in her early forties, but the life, the force had gone from her. She was broken. Though she remained a beautiful woman, her beauty was not the same. It was no longer the beauty of a woman sure of herself and sure of life, vital and magnetic. Now it was a different beauty. The dark hair lost its luster, the dark eyes were always wondering, the fine strong features were shadowed always. Grief could not change those high features, the clear throat, and the way she carried her head. But she wasn't conscious of beauty in the older way. What was left was an instinct more than a conscious pride. And if she still dressed to set off her fading color, wearing an orange Tunis shawl or a muslin dress with a bright orange sash, that was out of taste and habit, a part of her. She stayed within doors, seldom caring again to walk on the free terrace above the lake. And the house grew austere. No longer did people come from Cleveland and Toledo. No more did the New York train come grinding to a special stop at Pride's Crossing while some Murdock friend or relative stepped down to board Roger Bradley's shining surrey. The fancy team grew fat in the pasture, for Grace cared no longer to drive through the tree-bordered roads of Ocean County, and Roger had no heart for driving alone.

On rare times when Roger could persuade her to walk

under the trees his wife might see Ursula sitting on the terrace-edge above the shore.

"Oh, Roger! She's lost to us. Can't we ever find her?"

Some women never forget the first fatality of grief.

Three times Roger went away and each time he brought back a Persian kitten. Each time their voices trembled as they carried the golden ball to Ursula.

"Here's Jo-Jo, darling. See? We found Jo-Jo."

But each time the child looked on with those blank blue eyes.

"See how soft Jo-Jo is. Pat Jo-Jo."

She held out a wondering hand and touched the kitten uncomprehendingly. Then she turned away unchanged. "Where's Jo-Jo?"

In the first years they tried every hope. Specialists from New York, and later from London, got off the train at that absurd country station and studied the child with lines in their brows. At last a German surgeon tried an operation. For six weeks Ursula lay in a Cleveland hospital with great bandages about her head. For three weeks of that time Roger was at home with his wife. Every evening he went outside. He walked up and down the terrace with thoughts washing against his mind like the tireless washing of the lake on its dark shore. At last he went back to the shadowy clump of cedars, where Elsa Bradley was buried, and her two infants, and Jo-Jo the cat; and there Roger dropped to his knees and prayed. He was not a habitually religious man. When he returned to the house his face looked very tired in the lamplight. The other three weeks Roger was in Cleveland, watching at Ursula's bedside.

When he brought her home, his wife's voice called him upstairs.

"Roger, is there any hope?" She lay half upright in the snowy bed, leaning forward eagerly, her eyes afraid to see his face. "I haven't dared to think of it. Is there any change?"

Roger stood in the doorway; his face never showed his feelings. Then he stepped into the room. Ursula was beside him, her hand in her father's large hand. She went to the bank of windows and stood there with the light caught in her honey-colored curls. Her eyes went beyond the terrace to the restless hands of surf washing white over the sand.

"Where's Jo-Jo?" she said.

10

As time went on Grace felt that life had stopped for her. She saw her children change, but the meaning of her own life was terribly fixed. The children grew up and went East to college and Ursula became a tall young woman. Her eyes and hair had darkened, she had the fine clear throat and even carriage, and she came to look strangely like her mother, except for the emptiness in her face. She was beautiful and stately in a troubling way when you saw her across the grassy terrace, her figure against the pale Lake Erie blue. Nearer, she did not lose that bearing, that strange self-possession; she walked slowly, with an unreal grace, and sometimes, at evening in half-light, her face was very moving in its sadness. Yet it was a child's face, untouched by experience,

unchanging in its search. A strangely wistful child's face, with the wide eyes always sadly wondering, the face of a seeker. But it was a child's seeking, and it left the large eyes strangely empty.

In those years Roger was thrown back on the land for reality. Day after day, evening after evening, he went over his fields, followed his fence rows, studied his growing crops. He began to feel closer to the farm, and he devoted himself to it with a singleness he had not known for many seasons. He put off his morning coat and striped trousers for tweeds and a corduroy jacket, and his big hands grew weathered again and familiar with the feel of harness and the bony rumps of cattle. Now he found a contentment in this land; the earlier struggle was past, and with it the first pride and the restless desire to push back his fences and encircle more fields. What remained was more quiet than that; it was a security, a contentment. So he went from pastures to the stables, from the orchard to the growing fields of grain. And while he chose not to have a hand in the farming he still gave it his thoughts, going over it in his mind with a curious passive quiet and joy.

Sometimes he sat all day in the horse pasture, feeling the familiar earth under him, gazing across his grassy acres to the windy pastures of Lake Erie. Sometimes Ursula found him there; she was a wandering child. All day in summer she went thoughtfully up and down the shore, under the spreading maples in the grove, along the orchard, through the grape arbor, peering childlike at the purple clusters among the heart-shaped leaves. Always alone, always quietly searching. When she found her father in the pasture, she

stopped without pleasure or surprise. "Where's Jo-Jo?" she asked.

Her father spoke to her quietly. "See the colts over there? They've been frisking today. They like to feel the wind blowing the manes up from their necks."

His voice was unexpectedly gentle. His need of affection was in his voice, and his loneliness also.

"That's Snowball, looking at us now. He has a white snowball on his head like his mother. He's a nice fellow, isn't he?"

"Where's Jo-Jo?" Ursula answered.

With this sadness never far from his thoughts, Roger went over his farm. It was all good land: fine wide fields of black loam with drainage ditches running through. The new fields, the last two hundred acres he had acquired, didn't hold his affection so much. They were as fertile as any, and they bore good crops. In idle seasons they produced a fine grass forage, and when they were plowed the furrows shone damp and rich-looking in the sun. But the best feeling came from the oldest part of the farm, the original section of his homestead. Here Roger's youth came back to him, faintly and with a goodness. The forest he had cleared still enriched the earth, the furrows he had broken were the first cultivation of that land, the seed of grain and of desire he had sown were its first harvest. Sometimes after a rain he walked along the drainage ditches where the quiet murmur of water was the voice of these acres: a deep voice, secret and strong, confident of endless richness, the hidden water running through the tiles. That was music. He had given his youth, his strength, his hope to these acres, and now they had a

strength to give him back. Sometimes he felt the years drop away and his shoulders square with young manhood, and he half expected to find the rude cabin he had built and Elsa Sletter standing in the doorway. For her youth as well as his own had enriched this land.

When he talked with Peder of the rotation of crops in the autumn, the two of them walking through rustling corn rows and looking over a tract of barley stubble, he said sometimes, without warning:

"These are the best fields, where your mother and I began."

Peder remained silent, hiding his thoughts. With what might have been self-consciousness he coughed a dry quiet cough that made a vague tug at Roger's memory, so that he sometimes said with a quick surprised glance at his son who stood taller than he:

"Your mother was a fine woman, Peder."

And Peder's patient face darkened, remembering the other Bradleys beyond the windbreak. He had never stepped inside the Homestead after Ursula was hurt. He never forgot Grace Bradley's words, "He did it, I know he did!" nor the cold black hate in the faces of her children.

Many times Roger wanted to talk about that day, and to tell his oldest son how lonely a man can be for a woman, lonely enough to love again though a part of his life is buried with the woman he knew first. But Roger could never say those things. He looked into his son's gray eyes, and he saw the straight Bradley mouth, not given much to speaking, and he never could say anything more than: "She was a fine woman, your mother."

In the nineties there was a great pull from the land to the cities growing up suddenly along all the lakes. Very early the Murdock boys made it known that their futures were to be in offices overlooking Euclid Avenue and Genesee Street. And they were restive even in summers at the Homestead. When the great Chicago fair was on they boarded the Flyer at Pride's Crossing and went for three weeks to the young wide-spreading city between the Illinois prairies and the blue waters of Lake Michigan. They came back to the Homestead with glowing talk of the lobby in the Palmer House, the magnificence of the fair grounds, the grandeur of the Midway, and the whole vast web of Chicago from the dizzy crest of the Ferris wheel.

But their half-brother Peder was already settled in his way of life. He had no taste for cities, and he was not even curious to see the marvels of the Midway. The reports came to him indirectly, for he never exchanged words with the Murdocks; the trouble lay dark between them. But Roger saw the fatigue and patience in his oldest son's eyes, and he proposed a brief autumn vacation from the farm. The reproach grew in Peder's face as he listened.

"There's a lot to see in Chicago," Roger said, feeling half guilty as he spoke. "They say people have come from all over the world."

Peder's answer was quiet and final, and it made the World's Fair a tinsel thing. "I've got my work to do," he said. "I can't go running off to see a Ferris wheel."

The fact that the Murdock boys were going to the cities and that Peder and Jonas were staying on the farm made the contention between them all the sharper. The Sletter

ways were not the Murdock ways, and if the Sletter way was simpler, it was also the Bradley way of life, they felt; and they resented the eastern clothes and the college manners that Sterling and Kirkwall brought back to the farm in the summers. With them there was no tug of life outside the farm, unless it was for land and cattle and the American earth farther west in a newer region. Jonas sometimes spoke of Timothy: "I wonder how he's getting on. There's lots of country out there—Colorado, Utah, Arizona. There's prob'ly a hundred things a man could turn his hand to." With Peder there was not even that restlessnesss. The farm answered all his needs and his desires. His father had reclaimed it from swamp and forest; he had been born there, and he was at home on that earth. How deeply he preferred the windy freedom and the old tasks familiar from his boyhood, he could not have declared. He never tried to formulate his contentment, even to himself. But this was where he belonged; and the familiar earth, the rhythmic seasons, the routine tasks of the soil were satisfying to him. The very familiarity was a part of the comfort. And yet he could see the times changing. He had not to go beyond his own fences to know an age was passing. Even the lake, so constant, so little touched by man's devices, was different now. From March to November he could see the wind-filled sails of schooners bound to Cleveland and Erie and Buffalo with deckloads of Wisconsin pine; and there were always plumes of smoke out there where the sky came down: the whalebacks carrying their deep loads of coal and iron between Conneaut and Duluth. While he plowed the unchanging fields he could look off to the point, across blue water, and

see the tower of rock that grew out there. They were building a lighthouse to guide the growing shipping to Sandusky.

So Peder ran the farm, with the help of hired men, and his wife bore him two sons, Carl and Alan. Carl was a rugged boy, but no farmer. Out of his own choice he built boats and sailed them on the lake; he worked in the fields under compulsion. Alan was even less a farmer. A late child, born in his father's fortieth year, he was a bookish boy, frail and white-skinned. Even as a child he preferred to gaze over the lake or sit indoors with a big illustrated *David Copperfield*. When he worked for a day in the hayfield his small white hands would blister painfully. Peder used to look at his son's hands with a puzzled and worried frown. They were not hands for a farmer's boy.

II

In the summer of 1912 Grace Bradley died. Roger buried her beside the other graves in the shadow of the cedars. There were Murdock grandchildren by that time. Sterling was a grain broker in Buffalo, and he had married a pretty blonde wife who, when they came to visit the Homestead, seemed half lost in the wide acres, the wood lots and the sandy shores of the farm. She stood by Grace Bradley's grave, looking frightened and lost, with her small uncomprehending children at her side. Kirkwall brought two sons to his mother's funeral. His wife remained in Cleveland where she was undergoing her third confinement. Rosemary, handsome and dark like her mother, already growing plump at twenty-six, was there with her daughters, golden-haired children who

even at their grandmother's grave could not forget the excitement of the big barns, the gentle horses, the deep dim mows of hay. With them was their father, Ansel Crain, a boyish-looking man with a gentle, amused face and a voice both soft and full. At the edge of the circle stood Ursula. She stood there in her strange self-possession while the casket was lowered into the earth, her face earnest and wistful and her eyes quietly seeking. When the service was half over, she wandered away.

In her will Grace Bradley left to her four children the hundred acres that had been her wedding gift. They promptly sold it, turning over a quarter of the sum to their father to hold for Ursula. Roger was deeply hurt. He knew they had agreed to do it against his will. When he protested they merely said it was their mother's land to leave them, and they needed money in their business. Business came before sentiment, and there was enough of the farm left anyway.

On an evening late in August, Roger walked in the soft summer dusk. Across the fields he heard the railroad whistle, and then he saw the lighted cars glide through the darkness like a slow meteor. He reminded himself that this was 1912 and times were changing. Farming was not the great thing in this new century. The young men were going to the cities. The old fixed order was breaking up. The lake out there was black with smoke, coal going up to Duluth and Superior and Copper Harbor, iron going down to Cleveland and Erie and Ashtabula. The automobile factories were spreading over acres in Toledo and Detroit. The lake shore

was being built up with bungalow colonies and beach resorts. Times were changing. But the realization only made him more deeply attached to the farm.

Feeling this way, Roger plodded down to Peder's house in the slow summer twilight. But this was an evening of misgivings. He found the doctor's carriage under the trees.

"It's tuberculosis," the doctor said. 'He'll have to give up everything. I don't know whether we can check it."

The disease that Peder had disregarded made rapid strides. Peder Bradley died the day after Christmas, 1912. Then there was another mound beneath the cedars.

12

Roger's strong clan sense made him sad at what was happening in twentieth century America. Families scattered to the winds. People borne on shifting currents of economic circumstance, moving from city to city, from place to place, without any center, without nativity. He would have chosen that all his sons and daughters live on this land; but that was not to be. The Murdocks were not akin to the soil. They had been reared in the Homestead, but not on the farm. They had gone to college and they were city creatures in their instincts and desires. Only the Sletters kept to the farm, Jonas and his family, and Peder's widow with her two sons. Once or twice a year came a brief word from Timothy in the West. He spoke of a variety of undertakings, lumbering, contracting, mining, real estate, and he never spoke of returning to Ohio. It hurt Roger that any son of his should not

feel the Homestead tugging him back. And it hurt him even more that all of Grace Murdock's children had renounced the farm. All but Ursula.

Since they chose not to live on his acres, Roger made certain that they should at least have a center there. He put it to them bluntly: "Blood is thicker than water. I settled this land when it was public domain. I made this farm what it is, not for me but for you. I wanted you to have a place to live and to pass on to your children and their children after them. You don't choose to live here and farm the place, so I'll farm it for you, with Jonas to help me. But I expect you to spend a part of every year here with your families. Some people go off to Cape Cod, or California, or Canada, or some other place. I expect you to spend your summers here. This farm is worth a hundred thousand dollars. With real estate values going up the way they are here along the lake, this land may be worth a half a million before I die. Now I'm not going to divide it even, and I'm not going to leave it for you to fight over. But I expect you to spend your summers here or I'll take it that you're not interested, and I'll leave you out of it entirely."

Perhaps the words weren't needed. There was a good thick Bradley blood in the Murdocks, and they might anyway have preferred to return to the place of their youth. It was ideal in summer. Even in hot Ohio seasons the lake always cooled the air. The Homestead itself was an impressive and commodious house, and when it was equipped with water and electricity there was no need to look beyond it for comfort. And Roger built other houses, houses for the Murdock families and a new house near by in the trees for

Peder's widow. She lived there the year round, and there the boys, Carl and Alan, grew up.

These were lonely years for Roger. With Grace Bradley dead and the three children gone, he was left in the big Homestead with the servant woman and Ursula. He and Ursula ate their meals silently at the long oak table, frequently by candlelight because Ursula found a childish pleasure in the yellow tapers. She would sit there at the far end of the table from her father, and at twenty-five she was a woman of dignity and bearing. She had grown larger than her mother, but she had her mother's clear white throat and a fine carriage of her head that sometimes startled Roger Bradley. She would sit there silent, her face full of candlelight and little else, but as the eyes shone in that living light and the parted mouth showed the childish pleasure she never would outgrow there was something in her that stirred Roger's heart. After the meal he would take her hand as though she were a child still. "Shall we go outside to hear the lake, Ursula?" And her only answer was, "Where's Jo-Jo?"

In his loneliness Roger asked Peder's widow to come to live in the Homestead. Irma shook her head, silently. When Roger pressed her and wanted a reason for the stubborn refusal, she only said: "They hated Peder. They hate me. They hate my boys. I cannot live where they live." Roger protested that the Murdocks were there only in the summer, that only Rosemary and her family lived in the Homestead then, and that he would make some other arrangement for them; but Irma would not yield. She had acquired Peder's quiet will.

Roger shook his head, troubled, feeling strangely responsible and yet not understanding how he had done this to the children he had begotten. It was then that he built a house for Irma, fronting the grassy terrace and the lake, visible through the trees from the porch of the Homestead. Frequently he came to the house and found Alan reading there. The boy was fond of asking questions about the early years in Ocean County, and Roger found a strange pleasure in talking of his first cold northern winter, the clearing of brush land, the draining of the marsh, and the building of the Homestead as a symbol when the struggle was past.

Sometimes he saw Alan pass along the terrace, not at farm tasks but wandering, and he saw him sometimes with Ursula. The two of them seemed to enjoy being together. They walked for miles on the deserted shore, and after such a day Ursula always sat very tranquil in the big living room. Alan had discovered that color had a curious appeal for her. Sometimes he brought an armload of yellow mustard bloom or a great clump of thistle, the deep purple blossoms flecked with silver wisps of seed; and Ursula's dark eyes lighted as she carried them in her arms. Or he scoured the shore for bright-colored shells and stones, and brought them to Ursula. She kept them in a satin-lined jewel box and often she handled them, amusing herself all of a dark afternoon sitting in a window and going thoughtfully over them one by one.

His grandfather asked Alan a little wistfully what made the boy so fond of Ursula. Alan could not explain it: he only knew that being with Ursula was strangely like being alone, but more pleasant some way. The fact was that Alan

grew up knowing Ursula as she was, and to him it never seemed so terrible. Certainly the two of them could sit for hours on the rotting old wharf below the terrace, hearing the noisy wash of waves and looking across the windy water. They sat there like two impersonal creatures, having no need for speech. To a casual observer from the shore Ursula might have been the boy's mother. But they sat there as two quiet children with their two worlds in their minds. Alan's world was full of sharp delights and uncertain yearnings, a world of sunlight's warmth and a snowstorm's stinging, of the sure cycle of the seasons and the familiar sequence of plowing, planting, and the ultimate harvest of the farm; and it was the world of that blue Lake Erie horizon with the wondering always what land was beyond it, what years lay beyond and what disclosures for him. Ursula's world was strangely bright and vacant. Sometimes she didn't know whether her place was back in the big white house under the trees or out on the pale waters somewhere. It was a child's wonder, and her world was not a woman's world at all, but that smaller and yet more boundless world of childhood.

In snow and rain Ursula took a childish pleasure. She never tired of walking in fresh snow, feeling the fall of flakes upon her cheek, turning to see the soft destruction her feet had made in a white meadow. She never seemed to feel the cold. Or she would peer out the window at the rain-blurred fields and the pelted lake, tracing with her finger the jerky drops of water on the glass. Sometimes she and Alan walked on the wet beach with the hard rain soaking them, or they tramped at dusk over the rain-drenched pas-

ture. Then they would come into the big house with the smell of wet earth upon them and lie down on the floor at the hearth's edge, smiling in the yellow firelight till the warmth had dried them. After Alan had gone, Roger might see Ursula's lips moving as though she spoke earnestly and eloquently and in secret. That wrung his heart more than the forever lifted voice: "Where's Jo-Jo?"

Sometimes from a window Alan's mother followed the strange two of them, the earnest boy and the woman so remotely self-possessed, and it puzzled her to see them sitting under the gnarled apple tree with their eyes following the slow smoke of a freighter near the sky, or walking in the knee-deep pasture grass on a windy day. She thought of the day when Peder took his gun so thoughtfully to the pasture, and of the slow and lasting bitterness that separated them from the Homestead, and then she saw these two walking past the graves by the cedars and entering the orchard. So she shook her head, wondering at the strangeness of hatred and love.

To Roger there was a curious compensation in this friendship. He had always got what he had wanted. He had five hundred acres, houses, barns, blooded cattle and horses, and a name familiar beyond the bounds of Ocean County. Nobody but himself knew how he had failed to get the thing he wanted most—affection, understanding. In the slow years of Grace Bradley's decline he had patiently, silently hoped for some reconciliation between her and Elsa Bradley's son. He tried to make his wishes known to them, but he had no words to use and he never asked outright. Probably it would have been the same; he knew his wife's pride and his son's

stubbornness. They had never exchanged a word since that black burning moment while the doctors stood over Ursula, and now they were both dead and lying near each other, quiet, under the cedars. They had passed their hatred on, a curious hatred with a Bradley texture in it. "Blood," he had said, "is thicker than water," and if this family could not be bound by love perhaps the next best thing was hatred; indifference was out of the question. But now it was a beautiful and consoling recompense to see Peder's son walking on the shore with Ursula. Roger's affection went to Alan for it.

There were the other grandchildren—the Murdocks: Sterling's sons, Kirkwall and Gordon, and Rosemary's daughters, Rachel and Donna and Ruth, and the senior Kirkwall's three children, Richard and Bruce and Phyllis. They all came to visit in the summers, and while it was clear that they did not in Roger's way belong to the place, they brought life and youth to the big house under the trees. As time went on they even came to show that the place had a hold on them, a reality that was more than custom and habit. On the other side were the Sletters, growing up on the farm. There were Jonas's three daughters (humiliating not to have a son), plain sensible girls who were contented with Ocean County and would probably marry the neighbor boys who took them to the Four H Club socials at Pride's Crossing. And there was Alan's brother Carl, not a farmer but a boy with water in his heart. Every year he overhauled an old sloop he had sold a calf to buy. He worked on it through bright spring days when the April sun was a warm coat on his back and the wind hummed in the shrouds. He went over the keel boards with sand- and

emery-paper and smelled the good reek of the wet hull and the hemp lines of the rigging. At night he stayed to sleep there, preferring the tiny cabin to any shelter on solid ground. In the morning his eyes would light again at the fine curve and sweep of the strakes, the clean lift of the prow.

There were all these grandchildren. But it was Alan Bradley who was first in the old man's heart.

13

During the war years Roger Bradley prospered greatly. His farm was worth a fortune till the bottom fell out of produce prices in 1920. Then the highway engineers came through, surveyed the farm, acquired over Roger's protest the right of way, and drove U. S. Number 20 past his barns and through the heart of his grain fields. Soon there was a race of traffic between the wind-rippled wheat and the marching rows of corn. Roger could do nothing to avert it; this was time's change. But his voice rose and his eyebrows bristled when billboard men came bidding for frontage in his fields, and a glib young agent, with an offer to keep his barns painted *Motorists Wise Simonize,* never forgot the deep flashing anger in the old man's face. Almost immediately new lake resorts appeared along the shore, and his acres grew in value not for wheat fields and dairy pastures but for bungalow reservations and pavilion sites, for shore clubs and beach colonies. The Murdocks wanted to sell; the whole shore could not grow up in pleasure places and if he did not take the offers now the resorts would locate else-

where. Roger closed his eyes and recalled the forest growing and the green hummocks in the sloughs and the clear sweet meadow of wild grass above the lake. He shook his head: no dance halls on these acres. At last they gave up, knowing that his mind would not be changed. They looked at the lights of Cedar Point, six miles up the curving shore, and heard faintly the music from the hotel beyond their west boundary. And they waited for the old man to die.

III

Death in the Orchard

I

But Grandpa did not die. The days passed and he refused to die, and as he lay there looking out where the younger generations of Bradleys moved along the shore, the clear gaze came back into his eyes. At last he woke early one morning, refused to let the nurse take his temperature, and called for a breakfast of veal chops and a baked potato. As he sat there propped up in the big bed in the strong morning light, he didn't look like a man who had been whispered about. His lean face with the strong cheek-bones and the wide-set eyes was vital still; even the curling gray mustache above the straight Bradley mouth looked vigorous and hearty. His hands held the breakfast tray as though they could still grasp plow handles.

When Rosemary came to get his tray, the old man was gazing out the bank of windows. "There's Alan down there. How long has he been back?"

"Alan?" Rosemary repeated it as though the name were new to her.

"Yes. How long has he been back?"

"Must be a week now." Rosemary lifted the tray from the bedside table.

"A week? Why hasn't anybody told me?"

"You saw him, father. You spoke to him when he first came home."

"When?"

"The night we were so worried about you." While she spoke Rosemary was vigorously tucking the counterpane across the old man's shoulder.

He shook his head. "I don't remember."

"Shouldn't think you would," she said with brusque affection. "As close a call as that." There was more of her father than her mother in this woman; she had a colloquial directness that, like her plump figure, seemed out of keeping with the erect head and the fine clear Murdock throat. She patted up the pillows and left him.

But when she was carrying the tray down the hall, Grandpa called after her. "I want to see Alan. Go over and tell him. Send him up here right away."

Rosemary stopped at the foot of the stairs, her plump matronly figure expressing a kind of pent indignation. She saw her husband there, standing boyishly in his tweeds and lighting his after-breakfast pipe.

"I'll do no such thing," she said, thrusting a little with the words. "The idea!"

Ansel Crain looked at her in his bland way, not without affection, while he sucked the match into his pipe. He had never once hurried in his forty-nine years. When he had the fragrant blue smoke in his nostrils he asked incuriously: "What idea?"

"Grandpa—why, he doesn't know what he's doing. First he sends the doctor off like a guilty schoolboy and then he calls for a breakfast that would kill a normal person and

now he wants me to go over and bring that boy to him. The idea!"

"What boy?" Ansel asked around the stem of his pipe.

"What boy do you suppose? Alan."

Ansel smiled with the fine webs about his eyes. "Still got life in him, unh?" And he puffed pleasantly at the pipe in his mouth.

Rosemary went on: "Last week was the first time Irma Bradley ever set foot in this house. That was because we all thought Grandpa was dying. Now if he thinks I'm going over to knock on her door, he's mistaken."

Ansel nodded in a rapid jerky way, and with the pipe still in his mouth he made little jiggles of smoke between them. The lines were twinkling around his eyes as he went out onto the porch.

Rosemary carried the tray back to the kitchen. "The idea," she said freshly to Hulda.

The old cook looked up from the stove. "What's that, Mrs. Crain?"

"It's old age, Hulda." There was something about Hulda that invited the philosophical. "The longer people live, the stubborner they get. Yes, that just what it is, just plain old age, stubborn and unreasonable."

"Yes, and what is it?" asked Hulda.

"Grandpa wanting me to bring Alan to him. The idea telling me to go over there."

Hulda looked startled. "He wants you to go over there?"

"The idea," Rosemary said again. "He can't know what he's doing."

She started off to tell some one else, but first she said

over her shoulder: "You'd better not go up there for a while. He's all right now. He'd only think up some new thing. Doctor said he ought to stay quiet."

Then she was out the side door and walking restlessly across the terrace to the small cliff that dropped there sharply. The lake was tranquil. In that still August morning there was not a ripple on the beach. The water was dove-colored and ran out to a vague gray-blue where the far sky came down. The horizon was soft with the August softness; water and sky merged soundlessly out there.

The light and stillness soothed Rosemary so that she became aware of the warm morning sun and the almost palpable buoyancy of the air. She began to feel indulgent again for the old man lying up there in the big bed. He had been near death, and he could never be far from it now; it must be hard for any one to die. She formed that thought for herself and it gave her a quiet pleasure; she was a woman who enjoyed commonplace thoughts.

When she heard a step behind her she turned to see Ursula. Her sister walked lightly; though she was forty and a tall woman she had retained a peculiar quality of grace, as though that too was left from childhood.

"Where's Jo-Jo?" she asked, her voice musical and sad, the child's troubled look in her face.

Rosemary put a hand on her sister's arm. "Good morning, dear. It's lovely, isn't it?"

"Where's Jo-Jo?" Ursula repeated in the same tone, like an echo.

"Down by the shore, perhaps. Have you looked there?"

One of the questions they only asked themselves was

whether Ursula comprehended. There was no way of being sure. But it was better to talk to her as though there was no question.

Then Ursula's face brightened quickly and she moved away from Rosemary's hand, leaving her sister with a kind of broken gesture looking after her. Down the shore, sitting under the twisted apple tree, was Alan. He waved a hand to Ursula and then stood up as she approached; he was always very courteous to her.

Rosemary's plump figure straightened again. "The idea," she said to herself, and she turned back to the Murdock houses among the trees.

But she was disappointed. She could see that Katherine and Sterling Bradley were not up yet, though the boys were loudly chasing golf balls over the terrace, and at the second cottage she learned that Kirkwall and his wife, Marcia, had already gone to Sandusky on an errand. Rosemary returned unsatisfied to the Homestead.

In the dining room she found Donna and Ruth at breakfast. Ruth finished first and hurried out because she heard her cousins making up a game of clock golf on the terrace. Donna sat over her coffee, her sun-browned elbows on the table, her clear brown throat showing in the V of her tennis blouse, her eyes glancing over the headlines of the *Plain Dealer* where her father had left it. Rosemary pursed her lips and sat down across the table. This was as good a time as any.

Donna looked up, surprised. "What is it, mother? You look bothered."

Rosemary nodded firmly. "Your grandfather—"

"Hulda said he ate a big breakfast. He's better, isn't he?"

Rosemary went on: "He's talking about Alan again."

Donna was silent for a moment, and when she spoke there was a new edge in her voice. "Well, why shouldn't he?"

"He wants me to bring Alan to him."

"Isn't that all right? He hasn't seen Alan for three years."

"Of course it isn't all right."

"Why not, mother?"

"Why not?" Rosemary echoed. "He knows we don't go over there. Besides"—and her voice sagged after the protest—"he can see Alan all winter."

Donna shook her head. "Alan won't be here. He only has a few more days. He'll be gone before we are, even."

"Well, that's a good thing," Rosemary conceded, and then the indignant note was back in her voice. "But he shan't come into this house. I'll not bring him here."

Donna's head went up. "I will then." Ardent and wilful, her eyes answered the unyielding woman across the table.

It was not the words so much as the pent finality in them that startled her mother. Rosemary drew a sharp breath and her mouth tightened. She saw her daughter's face, aroused and strong, and in it was something she had never encountered there before. Here was a pride that one had inherited from the other. Suddenly and quietly, over a breakfast table, the Bradley will was confronted with itself.

Rosemary straightened in her chair. "Donna," she said slowly, "I've never heard you speak that way before. I never expected to. And since you compel me to, I can speak

plainly to you. For a week now you have made a fool of yourself with that boy. You have embarrassed all of us. Now you must not see him any more. I ask you not to see him."

Donna's eyes were flashing. "That's silly, mother. It's absurd. It isn't worthy of you, of any of us."

Rosemary's face was unchanged. "I ask you not to see him."

"But I tell you that's ridiculous. I can't help seeing him. We all live here, don't we? How can I keep from seeing him?"

"The rest of us manage to." While Donna sat blindly stirring a spoon in her coffee, her mother went on: "I don't understand you, Donna. For a week now you've been wandering around with him like a moonstruck schoolgirl."

"I haven't," Donna flashed. "You know I've had dates at the hotel every day."

"Just the same you've been off with that boy every time you saw him. I don't like it, Donna. None of us like it. They don't know what to think of you. Have you forgotten everything?"

"What is there to forget?"

Rosemary drew a deep and indignant breath. Just then Ursula passed through the hall, her tall figure eloquent in sadness, her dark eyes vacant.

"Ursula," she said, dropping her voice. "There's Ursula." And her face softened while she heard the slow step on the stairs. They never called her Aunt Ursula; she was not aunt or sister or daughter. She was apart, and strangely near to them all because not near to any. She was Ursula.

Donna's face was earnest. "Mother, you don't really think they're to blame for that."

Her mother stiffened. "I saw them bring her in when her hair was red with blood. I stood there in that house while the doctors were working over her." She computed silently. "That was thirty-six years ago, and I have never forgotten it. Never for a minute."

"But that doesn't make them to blame."

"You're not the judge of that." And Rosemary's eyes drifted away. "We were all there. Remember, we grew up with them. We saw how they were against us. They were against your grandmother from the beginning. As if she didn't have as much right here as they did. But they were against her. It killed her finally." Then she came back to Donna, her voice brittle again. "And now you ask what there is to forget."

"And I still don't know." Donna gulped her coffee angrily. "It doesn't make sense to me, not a word of it. And if Grandpa wants to see Alan I'll go and tell him so."

Her mother's voice rose quickly. "And I say you must not see him. For thirty-six years they haven't come to this house. I will not have you wandering around with that boy."

Donna leaned across the table. "That's just it. Now I see it. It's pride. It's just blind stubborn pride. You blamed them for what they didn't do, and so they wouldn't come near the house; and now you feel self-righteous about it and try to pass it down the family because it's your own jealousy and blindness and justification. Well"—and her nervous hands were beating on the table—"I'll not have anything to

do with it, I tell you. It's not my quarrel, and I'll not make it mine."

Her mother was standing, her face crimson, before she had finished. When Donna took another angry gulp of coffee, Rosemary opened her mouth to speak. But no words came. She turned and walked out of the room. Donna heard her step, firm and heavy, in the hall.

When the old cook came in, Donna was still stirring blind circles in her coffee cup. She looked up. "Haven't you got any decent coffee, Hulda? This is rotten, and it's cold as milk."

"Course it is," said Hulda, refusing the blame, "after you sitting there talking for twenty minutes. I'll get you some hot."

She carried the cup to the kitchen, but when she came back Donna was gone. Hulda shook her wrinkled head and began to clear the table.

Outside, on the porch, Donna stood restless, her face troubled and her fingers drumming a tattoo on the writing table. She took a cigarette from a box, and her hand was unsteady as she held a match to it. Pacing back and forth, she smoked the cigarette down rapidly. Through the door she could see her mother in the living room, sitting absurdly in the wing chair in the dark curve of the piano and holding a handkerchief to her eyes. Donna drew again on the cigarette. It was hot and dry, and as she passed the table she jabbed it, coal downward, with angry fingers and left it broken in the ash tray. For a moment she stood in the door, uncertain. Then she took a breath and went straight in to the living room.

"I'm sorry, mother."

Rosemary dabbed once more at her face and looked up with swimming eyes.

Donna pushed up a footstool and sat down at her mother's knees. Rosemary put a hand on her shoulder and drew her head to her lap.

"I'm sorry," Donna repeated. "Please forgive me."

Rosemary stroked her head. "Of course, dear. It's all right now."

"I'm ashamed, mother. I don't know what made me act that way. I didn't realize."

Rosemary smiled, and she was very girlish-looking with her eyes shining above her tear-stained cheeks. "There dear." And she stroked the sun-browned arms as though Donna were a child.

"You look so pretty, mother."

Rosemary's eyes brightened even more, and a new tear spilled down each cheek. "That's happiness," she said, swallowing. "You make me so happy, Donna."

"I want to." And Donna's own eyes were swimming.

For a moment longer they stayed there. Then Donna jumped up. "Come on outside. It's too silly sitting in here by the piano on a morning like this." They went, arms around each other's waist, to the porch, both of them suddenly joyous, their eyes filled with the morning light. "Isn't it glorious?" Donna said when they stood on the veranda looking across the sun-patterned terrace to the pale blue plain of Lake Erie.

"It's lovely, dear."

"You'll forget what I said, mother? You won't think of it again?"

"No, dear. Thank you." And she kissed Donna gently

on the cheek. "I wouldn't have asked you if I didn't feel it so. And you don't really mind not seeing him, do you?"

Donna turned in surprise. "I don't mind not seeing who?"

"Alan."

"But, mother—"

"Isn't that what you said?"

Donna's face had changed in an instant, and her lips were clenched in her teeth.

"Didn't you mean to forget that? You were sorry—"

"No, mother. I didn't mean that. I didn't mean that at all."

"You said you were sorry." Rosemary's face was breaking again. "What were you sorry for then?"

"I don't know. I don't know." And suddenly she threw open the screen door and hurried down the steps.

Out on the terrace she went with narrowed eyes, and when the tightness rose in her throat she ran blindly from her cousins with their game of clock golf on the grass. She stopped, breathless, at the shore, but the lump was still swelling in her throat and her eyes were burning. "It's not fair," she told herself with clenched fingers. "It's not fair." Her lips trembled with the repeated words.

The lake was quiet, with the August sun burnishing its distance, and far out a freighter trailed its feather of smoke. Above it hung a terrace of cloud, wind-blown, white, with blue strata showing through it and the vast blue shadow of space all around. She stood there, and after a time the aching released her throat; her clenched hands loosened and she felt more self-possessed. She looked back at the

house and wondered what her mother was doing, and she looked down the shore and was surprised to see Alan sitting under the last of the hemlocks. She raised a hand, and her first impulse was to join him there. But she didn't. She saw her father across the terrace and went to meet him under the trees.

Her father eyed her shrewdly. "What's wrong, sis?"

Donna looked up. "Nothing," she lied.

"Better tell me," he said in his country doctor voice.

Donna's eyes narrowed. "I just had a run-in with mother."

Ansel nodded thoughtfully and puffed at his pipe.

"What's wrong with her, dad? She doesn't need to get so upset about Grandpa, does she?"

Ansel Crain looked rather like a country doctor, bland, moderately intelligent, boyish, a bit rustic except for the amused light in his shrewd eyes. But he could appear serious, suddenly, like an unambitious doctor confronted with a critical case; and now his face was earnest and his voice didn't have its bedside quality.

"Can't tell about Grandpa, Donna. He's a funny fellow. Always does the unexpected."

"But he's better this morning."

"Yes. That's the trouble."

"Father!"

"I mean that's what's troubling your mother. He's well enough to upset her."

"I don't see why."

Ansel Crain sucked at his pipe. "Old trouble, I guess. Murdocks and Sletters."

"But that's so silly, father."

"Well, your mother doesn't think so."

"I know that." Donna's voice was rueful. "But I can't see why. I really can't, dad." There was a lifted question in her words.

"Reasons," her father said. "Good enough reasons too, I judge. They even affect you."

Donna's chin lifted. "No. They don't affect me."

But her father kept nodding.

"How?"

Ansel took the pipe out of his mouth and began thoughtfully tamping the ash with his thumb. "Look here, sis. Grandpa's ninety-four years old. He can't live much longer. This farm is one of the best pieces of property in the state of Ohio. Where is it going to go? That's what worries your mother."

"But what does she have to worry about it for? Grandpa will do what he wants."

"Well, you know he's changed his will every year since your grandmother died. He'll prob'ly shuffle it around a few more times."

"What of it? He's got a right to, hasn't he?"

"Yes, sure he has. But still, you're all his grandchildren."

"I guess he knows that."

"Maybe. But in these last couple of years Sterling and Kirk had to take the boys out of private school. And we haven't been any too generous with you and Ruth. You know, sis, the street-car business is shot. You might say it's off its trolley." His mouth twitched a little and then was

serious again. "There's been some question whether we could send you back to Vassar this year."

Donna was silent for a minute, and then her head came up. "What of it?"

"You're all his grandchildren, but Alan's the only one he sent to England. Three years of it."

"Alan's probably the only one of us worth it."

"Hm-m-m." Ansel peered at her and struck a match to his pipe. "That doesn't sound like a Murdock."

"Well, I think it's stupid. I'm not a Murdock anyway. We're all Bradleys, aren't we?"

"Yes, sure you are. But Grandpa might not think of it that way."

"Why not?"

"Well, the Sletters have got the advantage of us. They've stayed on the farm. That's what Grandpa wanted. Your side didn't stay. He didn't like that. He didn't like it when they sold your grandmother's hundred acres, and he still hates the sight of the Farview because it's built on that land. He's afraid they might break up the rest of the farm, all of it. And they would, likely. But the Sletters wouldn't. That's the point."

He puffed at his pipe and his eyes swept across the terrace. A figure in white flannels and a polo shirt came through the trees. "Speaking of the Farview, here's that young chap again. What's his name?"

"George Emory. I forgot. I had a tennis date with him."

"Well, play a good game. Don't let your mother's troubles upset you. Look out there." And he pointed over the lake. Halfway to the horizon three long freighters were

trailing their pennons of smoke, dark strata in the quiet sky. Slowly the boyish look came back into Ansel Crain's face. He might worry occasionally about the Bradley troubles, but it was really a woman's matter. It wasn't any of his doing, and he couldn't get much worked up about it.

"Hello, George," Donna called through the trees. "Father, you remember George Emory."

"Yes, yes, indeed. Good morning." Ansel shook hands with him. "We were just watching those ore boats. Seems good to have smoke over the lake again. Last summer there was no shipping at all."

Emory smiled and spoke in a hearty voice. "I know it. I'm in the railroad business, you know. Nickel Plate. When those fellows are hit, we are, too. No iron to haul down to the rivers. It makes a lot of difference."

Ansel had turned to this young man with a new interest. He was a tall vigorous-looking chap with a good square chin and a ready smile. His brown hair had been bleached to a honey color by the August sun. That blond light about his head made him seem very much alive.

"So—you're a railroad man," Ansel said with a kind of amused enthusiasm in his shrewd eyes. At that moment the morning express on the Lake Shore whistled for the crossing. Ansel turned to see the swift low train streak across the flat fields three-quarters of a mile away. It whistled again; in the bright air he saw the white jet of steam go up from the engine, and after four seconds the cry came to them faintly. He nodded his head meditatively once or twice and said, "I love the American railroad." There was a naïve directness about his voice that suggested a sentiment

far less general and impersonal. But he repeated it: "I love the American railroad."

"Now, father," Donna said quickly. "Don't get started on that."

"All right. I'm going down to the shore anyway. You two get along and have your game."

He watched them away, puffing at his pipe, and then he knocked the pipe out and walked thoughtfully in the elm shade, dappled with sunlight through the high branches. In his mind was still the picture of the train passing so silently over those low fields. Again the whistle screamed faintly, and he pictured the big locomotive and the twelve long coaches roaring past the little red station at Pride's Crossing: the great stroke of the engine, the red glowing in its belly, the white hiss of the valves and the whole long flyer streaming through. When it was gone the rails would hum for a little and the track would seem very empty while the distant brass-bound platform receded in the west. Sandusky, Toledo, Elkhart, South Bend, Michigan City, Chicago—he pictured that mighty race and he heard the whistle crying out for all the graded highways and the little dirt-road crossings; and then the final smoky splendor of the La Salle Street Station in Chicago, the long train standing inert under the train shed, the people streaming up the long platform, an exciting grit of cinders underfoot and the exciting sting of engine smoke in their nostrils. And there at the head of the quiet train, like an idling comet, the great locomotive panting in great slow measured exhalations.

As he thought of these things Ansel Crain's face had its boyish excitement. For it was true, he loved the railroad.

Frequently he slipped down the road in the evening to the Lake Shore crossing to watch the Limited go through. In his bedroom hung a calendar issued by the Pennsylvania Railroad, a handsome four-foot calendar showing a crack brick-colored Pennsy flyer rounding the Horseshoe Curve in the Alleghenies, and beneath the flyer were the year's twelve months with the blocks of numerals colored to represent the use of revenue as divided between wages, rolling stock, replacements, interest, and dividends. In his office in Portsmouth, Ohio, was a big dramatic calendar showing two locomotives, their searchlights brilliant in the darkness, racing through the night; it was *The Meeting of the Centuries* somewhere along the Water-Level Route. In the kitchen for the maid to study as she labored at the sink, was a scenic calendar showing the famed Georgetown Loop on the Colorado and Southern Railway, with a train headed north on the upper level and a train headed south on the lower level and both of them bound east for Denver and the windy plains. In odd moments he drew designs for locomotives and made rough pictures of stream-lined trains crossing spider-web bridges over a yawning valley. He loved to talk about the Flamingo, the Burlington Zephyr, and the Flying Yankee.

Now, as he walked along the terrace with Lake Erie quiet on the sands below, he saw two figures sitting on the old wharf: Alan and Ursula. Every day for a week they had been together; but it still seemed strange. In three summers Ansel had forgotten about that friendship. He thought of Ursula as inevitably alone. She was alone in her mind, alone in some strange world cut off from any other, and it seemed

strange to see her now sitting in the broad sunlight with this boy. While he watched, Alan lay out flat on the rotted planking and reached down with his bare arm in the water. When he drew up his hand he put a stone on the planking. Ansel watched him bring up another stone, and another. Ursula studied each one curiously and then added it to a pile she held in her dress. She seemed to be sorting them.

Ansel sat on the edge of the terrace, pulling his cap down to shade his eyes from the water's glare. He kept his cold pipe in his mouth, and he kept wondering about this curious friendship. He found himself thinking about Grandpa lying up there in bed, and he went over what all of them knew in their minds: that Grandpa's favorite Murdock was Ursula; she had stayed, poor creature; she had never gone away. And Ursula's favorite was Alan; for some strange reason this had always been. So Alan was Grandpa's favorite, too; it was that simple. Alan was not a farmer. He would never be one. But he was Grandpa's favorite. And it was just like Grandpa. . . . But, Ansel shook his head impatiently; it was like the women to think it out that way.

Down on the rotting wharf Ursula had taken off the orange scarf, such as her mother used to wear, and was heaping the stones in the scarf to carry. When she had them bundled up she crossed the beach and climbed the wooden stairs to the terrace. As she stepped onto the grass her dark eyes looked startled, seeing Ansel there.

"Good morning, Ursula," he said, and his voice could be very quieting.

"Where's Jo-Jo?" Ursula asked as she passed by.

Down on the wharf Alan sat. He did not look back, al-

though the voices must have been plain to him. Ansel studied the quiet figure, the narrow shoulders, the dark head bare to the sun. He heard a faint coughing and once or twice he saw the shoulders jerk a little.

Then Ansel went down the steps and across the hard-packed sand. "Hello, Alan."

Alan looked up quickly. "Oh, hello, Uncle Ansel." He stood up.

"Don't get up. I'll sit down with you. Fine morning, isn't it?"

"Yes," Alan said, slightly puzzled. Sletters and Murdocks nodded to each other and passed on. He could not remember anything like this.

"You've been away quite a while, haven't you?" Ansel asked in his easy voice.

"Three years," Alan said.

"Three years," Ansel repeated. "Seems short enough when you get to be fifty. But I suppose it's a long time to you."

"Yes," Alan said. "It seems I've been away a long while."

"But things here haven't changed much."

"No, they haven't."

"Ursula, poor thing." Ansel raised his eyes to the terrace. "She hasn't changed at all."

"No. She doesn't change."

"But Grandpa has given us some starts. It looked like the real thing last week. Nobody else could have come back. At ninety-four, too. You know he's eating like a harvest hand this morning."

"Yes, the nurse said he was better."

Ansel looked thoughtfully along the shore. "It won't

seem the same place when he does go. He made it what it is, and I guess he's still the most real part of it."

Alan nodded. "That's the way I feel."

"Of course all of you have got some of the strain." Ansel studied his nephew for a minute. "You're different, all of your side is different from our side. But the strain is there. Even in the great-grandchildren." He nodded down the shore to the place where Jonas's married daughters lived. "Remarkable thing that old man did."

Then he was silent, and Alan said nothing, thinking about his words and what they meant. Was it the farm? Or was it the family? Either way, Grandpa had left the stamp of himself marked clearly. Alan had again the sense of the long labors, the many changes, and yet the continuing life in that place from the time when it had been a wilderness of brush and swamp land to this bright August morning with the settlement on the terrace and the rich fields all around. An order of life had come and gone and given way to a new order. Even the old wharf where they were sitting was a remnant left from the long outmoded days. Years ago, every road that ended in blue water had its landing where the farmers hauled their grain or their live stock and the packet boat called once a week. Then the boat chuffed up a cloud of smoke, the paddle wheels churned the water, and the load went off to Cleveland or Toledo. But that time was far past. Now the road was obliterated and the old wharf was rotting slowly. The landing planks were thin and broken, the piles were scarred where many winters' ice had mangled them or they had rotted in the hard June sun. The boards were falling away and the

great rusted spikes stood up ragged in the piling. The wharf itself was a remnant. The life that brought it there had changed and many other changes had come and gone. But through them all there was a continuity: a will, a vision, and a presence. Amid all the crowded life about the Homestead, its accumulation, the many figures, the press of life, the silent dreams and desires, such strong demands of life, this place could never, despite all time, grow empty; upon this crowded shore one presence would always dominate and give it meaning.

"Yes," said Ansel, speaking out of his own thought, "Grandpa has seen a lot of change in this place. He was asking for you this morning. Did you know?"

Alan brought his mind back to the present. "Asking for me?"

"Yes. He wants to see you. No hurry about it, I guess. He's good for a while yet since he's got past this last call."

Then Ansel lit his pipe and got slowly to his feet. He looked over the lake. "Gets a bit hazy by the end of August, doesn't it? And the water seems bluer."

"It's that way all fall," Alan said. "October is perfect here."

"I've always wanted to stay on through September, but I've never done it. Sometime, maybe. If we get a whole lot richer or a little poorer than we are. Funny how a man can wear the harness."

Alan looked up at him.

"Business, I mean. Now you prob'ly wouldn't do it. But I'm like the rest. I help pull the thing, even when I haven't got much idea what it is we're pulling, or if it's worth it."

With those words behind him Ansel climbed the steps to the terrace and sauntered off beyond the windbreak. Alan thought about the man, his curious boyish enthusiasms, his half-amused philosophizing. All at once his memory brought up a forgotten line: *The world is a bundle of hay; mankind are the asses that pull.*

Now it occurred to him that Ansel Crain was the kind of man who made money in America. A man with limitations: caution, shrewdness, sentiment, a vague dissatisfaction, something always unfulfilled; but he could make money. Alan knew little about his uncle's business, only that he controlled a street-car system in a southern Ohio city; but he knew that he had been more successful than any of the others, that more than once he had put up capital for the Murdock businesses. And yet he didn't seem a man who had found anything. Uncle Jonas, across the pasture, with a wad of Piper Heidsick in his cheek, his mustache stained with it, and his neck red and wrinkled with weather, was more solid, more certain. And he was only a man farming his father's acres. Perhaps the answer lay in the lack of substance in business, or the lack of a fundamental belief in it. *The world is a bundle of hay; mankind are the asses that pull.*

Then he too climbed the steps. He turned toward the Homestead, thinking of his grandfather. At his first step on the porch Mrs. Crain appeared in the door.

"Good morning, Aunt Rosemary."

She stood quite straight and answered his greeting in a questioning way.

"Did Grandpa want to see me?"

She looked at him stonily, the strong Bradley glance. "He's resting now."

Alan stepped down guiltily. "I'm sorry." He struck off through the trees.

2

Beyond the wood lot, where U. S. Number 20 drove through the Homestead acres, Tatum Young sat on the stoop of a stone hut in the shadow of Roger Bradley's barns. The barns were spacious white buildings, spiked with lightning rods and mounted each with a square cupola where the pigeons gathered. Often Tatum shook his shaggy old head at those barns; a man might not want his buildings painted with Mail Pouch or Old Hickory Overalls, but still he wouldn't need to have them white and wanting paint three times as often as the red barns all around. Tatum shook his head with the dirty fringe of hair under his stained and shapeless hat, but he was used to Roger Bradley; he knew the old man had his ways and clung to them.

Beside him on the stoop dozed an unkempt dog, a stupid creature too old and fat to be of any use, and only when Tatum spat a brown stream past the beast's head did the glazed eyes open. Once the tobacco stream flecked a yellow ear, and at that the dog turned slightly, the ear half raised, and looked with mild reproach at the old man. Then the eyes closed again and the marked ear hung submissive. His mouth dropped open and the curly red tongue throbbed slowly over his toothless gums.

Tatum kept his face on the white slab of road, peering

through the strong mid-morning light. His blue eyes met each car that appeared from between the Bradley fence rows, followed it for a moment, then let it go for one approaching from the other direction. East and west his head swung like a mannequin in a show window. When several cars had passed his eyes grew quickly sharper and he muttered:

"Missouri, Sam."

The dog lifted an ear and then lay back with his gray muzzle on his forepaws. Tatum was busy with a stub of pencil and a yellow tablet of coarse paper.

"New Jersey," he added, and his blunt fingers gripped the pencil again.

"Kansas, Sam." And as quickly as he could look up. "Another Kansas. Friends, likely. Goin' home now. . . . Indiana, that don't count much. . . . Wup! Illinois and Ioway."

Often they came in a run like this, maybe ten minutes with nothing but Ohio and then all at once a string of good ones.

"Hup!" he grunted suddenly. "Blue and white—Oregon. Oregon, Sam." And he looked down at the dog triumphantly. Sam snapped lazily at a fly that had been walking across his nose.

"Oregon," he repeated, printing out the figures Y79327 in heavy black strokes on the page.

Now there was a run of Ohio cars and Tatum had time to gloat over that Oregon number. He paged back in his tablet. Only one other this summer, if he remembered, back in June sometime. Might be this same fellow going

east and now he was on his way back home again. At last he found the place, June 21. The same number, sure enough, Oregon Y79327, and the old man looked warmly down the road, as at a disappearing friend.

He was so absorbed in the highway that he didn't see Alan approaching through the wood lot.

"Hello, Tatum," he said, and the little man swung around, surprised. "Still watching the road?"

Tatum narrowed his blue eyes and peered at him like a gray old rabbit, shrewd and watchful behind a stubble of beard.

"Howdy, Alan." He put a hand out without looking and pushed the dog away. "Set down."

"No. I can't stop. I'm looking for my cousin—Donna. You haven't seen her, have you?"

"Can't say I have." He spat a brown arc. "What you lookin' for her for?"

"We're going to Sandusky."

"Sandusky?" The little man fumbled through his pockets and found a dime. "Get me a pack of chewin', will you?"

"What kind?"

"Any kind, jest so's it's t'bacca."

Alan nodded and put the coin away.

A car shot by and Tatum's quick eye caught the new color, black on green. He bent over his page, printing in his cramped hand.

"What was it?" Alan asked.

"Kansas."

"Have you got them all yet?"

"All but Nevada," he said with a touch of resentment.

"Nevada. That's a hard one."

"It's a hard one." Tatum agreed solemnly. "But I'll get it if it takes me twenty years."

There was a grating of gravel in the drive and Donna drove up in a roadster with the top down, her hair blowing.

"Sorry if I'm late, Alan. Good morning, Tatum."

The old man fumbled for his hat and Alan climbed in beside her. They waved their hands and were gone.

Tatum sat on the stoop again, his eyes on the highway. The sun grew stronger and he pulled his hat down over his forehead. His shoulder found the wooden post; his legs stretched out loosely in the warm light. The droning of rubber tires faded, the hum of motors drew away into distance. Soon his mouth fell open and his breath whistled in a slow and quiet rhythm. The dog looked up once and then dropped his muzzle on his paws.

The dinner bell ringing from the tenant house woke him. He stretched his arms and pushed his hat back from his eyes. He saw the men come out of the barn with their straw hats in their hands. They mopped their foreheads with their arms as they went to the house.

The bell had caught the dog's ear, and he was already on his four feet blinking and waiting. At last he put out a paw at the old man's leg.

"All right, Sam. I heard it. Come along then."

He got to his feet and stood there stretching. He was a shrunken man with stooped shoulders, and his figure cast a curious noon shadow on the ground, a hunched shadow with a bracket of sunlight showing the bowed legs and his long arms hanging at his sides.

A farmer would have known how a pitchfork put the stoop in those shoulders and how those lean long arms were made for pitching hay and throwing manure and handling a grubbing hoe in bad ground. And that is how Tatum had used them. Fifty years of it, probably nearer sixty if the whole thing could be remembered. On sheep farms and grain farms and dairy farms, on onion farms and beet farms and tobacco farms; in half the counties of Ohio, all the way between Lake Erie and that majestic river underneath its hills.

He had come to the Homestead in the eighties, a runty-looking man with wandering blue eyes, a strawlike stubble on his chin and a loose mouth stained with chewing. Roger looked him over and said: "You come back when you grow up. We can't use any runt hands here." But something in the little man's broad grin, showing his yellow teeth in good nature, and perhaps the pungent smell of horses that he carried, made Roger look at him more closely.

"You know anything about sick horses?" he asked.

The yellow smile broadened. "Sure do."

"Well, I've got a horse down. Been down for two days. Come on to the barn."

When the stranger knelt beside the bloated horse, feeling with his hands in the straw over the animal's belly, muttering little soothing grunts when the horse rolled its dark eyes, Roger knew he had a horse man. "Hm-m-m," the little man said. "Hm-m-m, hm-m-m." And as his hands moved over the swollen belly the horse laid its ears down and its eyes were quiet. "Hm-m-m, hm-m-m," he repeated with a

rise and a fall. His eyes began to search the stable and he was startled to see Roger bending over him.

"Fergot you was here," he said, smiling. "Need a tub of hot water, some big rags, and a blanket. Likely you got a syringe around some place."

In half an hour the wind had been released and the animal lay quiet, its belly relaxed under a steaming layer of cloths and a big horse blanket. When the little man knelt with a pail of warm gruel the horse opened its mouth and the big teeth began to munch softly.

After that Tatum Young was hired, and Roger Bradley boasted that he was the best man with horses in the state of Ohio. Not with sick horses only, but with a team in the field. He loved a job of heavy hauling: his blue eyes quick and watchful, his soft voice going on, the reins light in his hands; the muscles of his team straining and bunching and their shoulders leaning together while the tugs creaked and the traces rattled and the load got under way.

"You got good horses here," he said to Roger. "I like a farm that's got good horses."

So Roger was surprised six months later to find him standing there with his yellow smile asking for his time.

"What's the trouble, Tatum? Don't you like it here?"

"Yeah. Fine."

"Aren't you satisfied with your wages?"

"Yeah, sure."

"Don't they make you comfortable at the tenant house? I'll tell them—"

"Oh, that's all right."

"What's wrong then? Why do you want to leave us?"

The little man cocked his head soberly. "Well, I been here six months now. I got to be a-goin'."

"Where is it you want to go?" Roger asked.

"Cain't tell. South maybe. Down Darke County way."

So Roger settled up his time and the little man walked off, heading for Sandusky. Roger watched him, thinking a few days in Sandusky would see the end of his money and then he would be back. But when he struck the pike the little man's stride lengthened out into the loose gait that is the gift of wanderers the world over. Then Roger knew he was mistaken.

It was two years before he stood again in the barnyard, the yellow smile spreading on his face, his head cocked up.

"Any sick horses, Mr. Bradley?"

Another season he worked, and then he was off again. Not to distant places; perhaps thirty miles into the next county, perhaps three hundred miles to the hill farms along the winding Ohio—never farther. He was a Buckeye, and Ohio was world enough for him. A year or two and he would be back again; the season's end would find him tramping away. How many times it happened, neither Roger nor the little man himself could have told. Altogether he had worked on the Homestead many seasons, and there was a surprising skill in his hands and a tireless iron in those stooping shoulders. Many other seasons he had been away, and only occasionally he spoke of the scattered Ohio counties whose fields were gathered in his memory. All the way from the Little Miami to Rocky River he knew the color of Ohio acres, and he knew the cheap streets of Ohio's towns where he spent his wages in between: the

streets of Chillicothe, Springfield, Portsmouth, Lima, Ashtabula, Findlay, Hillsboro, Middletown, Urbana. These were short and heedless holidays spaced between long seasons of working fourteen hours a day on the sugar beet farms with Belgian and Hungarian field hands, the onion farms and vineyards of Erie County, the Green County tobacco farms and the sheep farms of Brown County, the horse and cattle farms in Adams County, the rye and barley farms of German colonies over near the Indiana line.

One last time he came back to the Homestead, and this trip there was a limp in his gait and a lean and dusty dog was at his heels.

"Not lookin' for a job this time," he said, and though the yellow grin was on his face his shoulders were more stooped and his face was broken with a web of lines. "Not lookin' for a job," he repeated. "Jest come home."

Roger had changed, too. His shoulders were bent, and his hand shook when he stroked the dog's ear. He thought a minute. "All right, Tatum. You can have the old creamery. I'll have the boys move some furniture in there for you."

"Come on, Sam," said the little man, and he shuffled off to the creamery.

When the square stone-floored room had been fitted with a stove and a bed and a chair and a table, and the blue smoke was sifting through its chimney and the little man was perched there on the creamery stoop with his dog beside him, Roger went along to the Homestead. "Tatum's back," he said to Jonas on the way. "He's got rheumatism, and old age too, I guess. It's about time he found a place to rest."

"You going to keep him here?" Jonas asked.

"The old creamery isn't any use to us now. I moved some things in there for him."

"Maybe he'll be some help with the horses," Jonas suggested.

"No. He won't have to work. He's just come home." And as Roger walked away it was plain to see the pride in him. When this farm touched a man he didn't forget it. Tatum Young knew where he belonged, and he had come home to stay.

That home-coming had been six years ago, and now in the square creamery room there were six yellow tablets piled on the table beyond the cracked sugar bowl and the Mason jar out of which knifes, forks, and spoons grew like a brittle bouquet. The old man had a tablet for every year, and he had kept his counting faithfully so that there were numbers from Texas, Delaware, and Arizona, from Quebec, Saskatchewan, and the District of Columbia, all listed in those pages. The green numbers of Delaware and the purple of New York State, the desert-yellow numbers of New Mexico and the black numbers of Idaho against the sandy shell of an Idaho potato, the dust-dimmed numbers of Arkansas and Oklahoma and the bright clean numbers of Connecticut. But he had never got a number from Nevada.

Now Nevada had become his obsession. Jonas sometimes shook his head over the old man keeping bachelor's hall with his old dog drowsing at his feet. Funny he didn't die off. Funny how he hung on. The hired hands who boarded in the tenant house with the farm foreman said he was dead and ready to be buried only he jist didn't know

it. What was he doing, sitting on that stoop forever? He was looking for Nevada.

Just one Nevada number was all he asked. He had the other forty-seven. And a few extras, government services, army, C.C.C., and five separate provinces of Canada. But he still lacked Nevada. He had checked the states off twenty times, and the list was that near complete. But still, in all that race of America before his door, there was no number from Nevada. Once he got an idea: There wasn't any such state; it was a name, like Frisco, and it wasn't real but only another place after all. When he had that idea he went to the Homestead and asked Roger Bradley to see the big atlas. He turned to the colored states, like the fields along the Scioto from Pine Mountain, just to prove it. But Nevada was there and certain—a strong yellow state with towns marked on it and big square counties, as real as Ohio. So he went back to his stoop and watched the highway. The cars raced east and west and the numbers grew on his pages. But there never was that one he waited for, from Nevada.

3

Sterling Bradley sat in a steamer chair in the shade before his own house, idly turning the pages of the September issue of *Fortune* which had arrived in the afternoon mail. He was forty-five, but he looked older. His dark hair was graying, and his strong mouth could not efface the sagging lines that had come faint and lasting in his face. Looks don't matter much, but Sterling Bradley was feeling old, and not any too

certain of himself and of his times. The past few years had told on him: the past precarious years, when every morning he was half afraid to open his paper for fear some new and half-suspected threat had leaped across America in the night. What did it require to live with composure in these times? Often he felt confused and hampered in some way, at the end of his rope. Of course he had said, "America will come back." He had repeated it stupidly and stubbornly: "America will come back. We're not through yet. America will come back." But what did that mean? It was hope or fear that made him say it, not any understanding or conviction. He remembered overhearing his office clerks, nodding toward the inner door: "He knows what it's all about." But he didn't. My God, he was more scared than they.

Now he looked along the quiet shore with the blue August sky coming down to a blur of smoke that was Cleveland, and his mind was full of questions. What was America? Why should it come back? Slowly he turned the pages of his *Fortune,* the handsome pages glorifying the vast and enigmatic system, the bland pages repeating the American idolatry of stone and steel and conveyor belts and sales executives and boards of directors meetings. But this time there wasn't any consolation. What was America? Railroad bonds and quarterly dividends and statistical averages, holding companies and controlling interests and all the legal tangle of subsidiary corporations? If that was America he couldn't be sure it was immortal. And yet it was the only America he knew. It was a system, vast, precarious, not free from folly. That was the emptiness of his

repeating: "America will come back. This country's not ready to fold up. America will come back.". . . Of course things were better. Again statistical averages, the industrial index—and he shook his head. The bottom could fall out any day; and if not next week, then next year, or in 1950. A few years didn't matter. When a man walks on thin ice without any shore he can't take much comfort because it holds him for a moment.

In these last years Sterling Bradley had come to feel differently about the farm. Quite apart from his sense of inheritance and his recognition of its value, he had begun to feel a comfort and stability there. He looked forward to vacation and found in these wide grounds a rest and security that other places could not provide. He had tried them briefly, Bermuda, St. Augustine, the Muskoka Lakes, Palm Springs, Santa Barbara. Not that he was growing sentimental about the farm. He would still sell it, if he had his way, to the first man who made a decent offer. But since his father would not budge and the acres were not to be converted into dollars that would bring their own comfort, Sterling Bradley had a curious new satisfaction in knowing that this was Bradley land. They all belonged here. They had sprung from this place.

Sometimes he even found himself wondering if his father was not wise. He had seen men lose everything, but this land was secure. Roger Bradley need not fear to open his morning paper. There was no panic in the canyoned streets of New York or the gray lanes of London, no rumor in Madrid or Moscow, no bloodshed in Havana or San Francisco that could alter in any way the yield of these black

acres and the slow circle of the seasons that passed over them. This land was lasting. It was secure. Now it occurred to him what a quiet life, how grateful a security and rest, a man might have if this were life, this sunlight lying on the fields, this August sky arching over.

He shook his head a little, as though to rid it of idle notions, and he turned again to the handsome pages of his magazine. *Let General Industries Credit build for the new era.* His eyes strayed from the page. He thought of the teletype clicking even now in the noisy rooms above Genesee Street:

3:28 P.M.

NEWYORK GENERAL INDUSTRIES CREDIT REPORTS WEAK POSITION NEW HIGH TOTAL OUTSTANDING

3:29 P.M.

CHICAGO WESTINGHOUSE AIR REDUC DIRECTORS PASS REGULAR QUARTERLY DIVIDEND 1.25

3:31 P.M.

SAN FRANCISCO WESTERN GRAIN EXCHANGE REPORTS SHARP BREAK IN WHEAT FUTURES QUOTATIONS COMING

Beside the boxed teletype the glass-domed robot spilled its ticker-tape:

SO.P.R.S. 19¾ ST.B. 16⅝ ST.C.T. 12½ ST.W. 17¼
S.ST. 4⅜ S.P.(A) 26⅛

Now he gazed down the shore to that vague smoke of Cleveland, and he tried again to grasp what was going on in America, in San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Denver, St. Louis, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York. Like a secret

heart beating, somewhere the nervous impulses went out and the teletype was clicking in a hundred cities simultaneous dispatches, and in a thousand rooms where men stood watchful the egg-shaped ticker was spitting paper tape. "America will come back." What America? What is America? That hidden heart beating in strange numbers, that cryptic index of transaction, the cold and cunning game of profit? Or something else—the Mississippi flowing southward past Wisconsin's bluffs, the slow pull of the plateau across Nebraska, the lean cold summits of Wyoming, the grassy cattle ranges above the Rio Grande?

Suddenly there were voices across the terrace and Kirk Bradley, followed by the youngsters, was racing toward the beach. They were in bathing suits with towels slung across their shoulders. "Last one in gets ducked!" Kirk called, and they were over the edge of the terrace. Sterling watched his brother disappear, first the brown legs and the dark blue trunks and then the sunburned shoulders. Kirkwall was nearly Sterling's age, but in another sense he was not so old. It isn't years but the hold a man has—on himself and on belief in the meaning of his world, of his America. Kirk had something he didn't have. That was another sign: when you are willing to concede your brother's having it and your not having it. You have the same blood, the same sinews; you have the same inheritance, but you see there is a difference. You don't admit it easily. A man is mortally jealous of his brother.

As he sat there with his mind full of these things Sterling Bradley was restless. At last he left his magazine in the chair and walked in the elm shade to the Homestead. On the

veranda he saw his brother-in-law, Ansel Crain, lying in the hammock.

Ansel looked up from the rotogravure section of the Sunday *Plain Dealer*. "Say, Sterling," he began in his familiar, half-amused voice, "I can think of a lot of things I wouldn't want to do for a living. Take Clyde Beatty now, in this lion cage." And he held the sepia picture out for his attention.

Then Rosemary appeared in the door. "Grandpa wants to come down. I've got the wheel chair ready. You two help him downstairs, will you?"

4

Alan saw his cousins crossing the terrace in bathing suits. Donna was among them, tucking her bobbed hair under the edges of a rubber cap. She waved a hand and called to him. "Come on in, Alan."

He shook his head and watched them run down the steps and across the beach till the knee-deep water threw them forward. Then they struck out, arms and legs flailing up a white surf.

When he looked back at the terrace he saw them bringing his grandfather in a wheel chair. They passed under the trees and into the sunlight, and there the old man waved them away, his uncles, his aunts, and the reluctant nurse; and when they were no longer hovering about him he threw the rug off his knees and sat there in the warm August sun looking over the lake. Alan went to him.

The old man lifted his clear gray eyes. "Well, son. Where have you been? I wanted to see you." His voice was quiet and strong, and the lean bearded face was full of life. He was still vital and sentient; ninety years had not entirely done for this man.

"I've been to the house," Alan said. "But you were always resting."

"Resting, was I? They'd have me up there like an old woman if they could. But tell me what you've been doing, son. It's a long time since you started off."

While Alan talked, the old man's eyes were on his face, and his thoughts followed the words into the gray squares of London and along the Great North Road past Cambridge and the cathedral towns and over the wild moorsides of Northumberland.

"And Scotland," he said, finally. "Did you find the old town, Ashkirk?"

Alan pictured the cobbled streets and the white stone houses and the arched stone bridges where the little river curved through the town.

The old man nodded, his eyes distant. "The same way my father told me. I was too young to remember when we came away."

The next thing his eyes had closed and the bearded chin had dropped to the flannel nightgown. He sat there in the strong sunlight and Alan could hear the measured breathing as the lean frame rose and fell. Alan's voice stopped, and he looked long at his grandfather, the gray head shaggy in the light, the jutting cheek bones, the big ears of a once robust man. His slippered feet showed under the rug that

he had thrown from him. His bony knees were drawn up and his big hands were laid on them carefully. The sunlight made small golden pastures of his hairy wrists.

He was at peace there with the August wind over the water and his acres spread about him. Alan's eyes went over the farm as though he could survey it once more for the man whose dream and whose possession it was. In a slow circle his gaze swung from the orchard to the inland fields, part hidden by the Homestead and the terrace houses; the barns, the stables, and the tenant houses back there beyond the wood lot where U.S. Number 20 slashed the acres; southward now, the tall corn waving August banners, the oat stubble with three golden straw stacks mounded in the sun, the long green hedges of the vineyard fields; and last the wide shore pasture with the Farview towers and balconies beyond. Then the circle could only be completed with space, light, freedom, the aloof and forever alien waters of Lake Erie.

So Alan sat there on the ground keeping a quiet watch while the old man slept. This, too, was a part of homecoming and a part of his nativity. They were both Bradleys, however different, the one unfit for any strenuous life, the other with his struggles all behind him. Yet they were akin, and this was their rightful place. Now Alan felt the old man's presence vitalizing all those acres, and he knew how deeply his life was planted there. He had broken ground and grown his wheat upon these fields, and for many years that grain would be living in this earth. Even if it were changed and built up with alien life, that wheat would spring up in unexpected places, as he had seen the

green spears growing in the Farview tennis courts: a wild stubborn life of some early planting, rooted and secret in that earth. The old man's roots were there.

Then the nurse came across the terrace, her stark white uniform looking violently out of place amid that green. "Sleeping, is he? And next to naked in this wind." She pulled the rug around the bent figure, and before the old man could wake she wheeled the chair away.

5

Sometimes Tatum ate his meals at the tenant house with the hired men, and sometimes he cooked a mess of his own over the iron stove in his one-room dwelling. Now he poked up the stove and sat down in its heat to peel the outer leaves from a head of cabbage. The sweat broke out in drops on his forehead. It was a warm day anywhere, and with the stove going the creamery room got hot in a few minutes. But the old man had a notion that heat was good for his lumbago and so he pushed his hat back on his tousled head and wiped his face in the crook of his arm. The blue sleeve came down mottled with dark.

"Here, Sam." And he held the limp green cabbage leaves in his hand.

The dog sniffed indifferently.

"Cabbage, Sam."

The dog opened his toothless mouth, mumbled the limp leaves briefly, and started outside.

"Sam!"

With a mild look of reproach the dog swallowed. Then

he lay down in the door while Tatum quartered the cabbage with his clasp knife and put it along with a two-inch slab of bacon on the stove to boil. He fell asleep before the old man had put a cover on the pot.

At the foot of the bed, in a corner of the room, Tatum found a pail half full of soapy water. He fished out a suit of cotton underwear, wrung the clothing weakly and draped it over the chair by the stove's warmth.

"Come along, Sam," the old man said, stepping over him and taking an interested look up and down the highway. "We cain't get no fried apples settin' here in this house." The dog blinked, yawned widely, and got slowly to his feet. Together they shuffled past the barns, along the edge of the wood lot, and into the orchard.

Tatum carried his pail to a row of Red Astrachans, the earliest apples in the orchard, and went over the ground searching for windfalls. The dog followed for a time, but soon he lay down in the matted grass under a tree's shade, his ears half erect, his muzzle in the grass, sniffing.

"Now don't you go to sleep," the old man said. "We got to get back 'fore that cabbage boils dry."

Then he stopped, sniffing the air with his thin nostrils for a moment and searching over the ground with his sharp eyes. But all he saw was the faintly red cheek of a Maiden Blush lying in the grass. He dropped it into his pail and went on. As he followed the row of Astrachans his pail filled up slowly. The warm ripe smell of apples came to him from the bruised fruit and his mouth began to water. When the orchard ended he sat down with his feet over the terrace edge, his blue eyes gazing across the lake. With

his clasp knife he cut away the bruised part of an Astrachan and then peeled the rest in a slow and careful circle. The unbroken peeling hung in a downward curl before he cut it free.

"Sam," he said, his eyes glancing around. But the dog wasn't there and he dropped the peeling in the grass. The white crisp apple he quartered, and then he cut the quarters in two, tucking the slices in his cheek. He softened them with his toothless gums and swallowed. While he sat there he became aware of a circle widening in the still water, a hundred feet offshore. Down the beach he could see the Bradleys swimming, and out beyond the bar where the blue water began the sailboat drifted, her sail slatting in the faint air. But here below the orchard the beach was empty. Nothing stirred the quiet water—there hadn't been fish along this shoal for twenty years; and so Tatum stared harder at another circle spreading there.

Suddenly he thought of his cabbage boiling on the stove. "Come along, Sam," he said, and he was surprised that the dog was not beside him.

When he got to his feet, straightening slowly to save that kink in his back, he saw that he was not alone.

"Hello, Tatum." Kirkwall Bradley stood there with his hair still wet from swimming, a tall man with shoulders that must go to waste in a Cleveland office. While he returned the greeting it occurred to Tatum that this man was growing to look like old Roger Bradley himself, the same rugged features and the lean jaw, the same direct gray eyes. But now his eyes swung out to the water where a new circle was widening offshore.

"You haven't been throwing apple cores out there, have you, Tatum?"

"I been watchin' out there myself," the old man said.

"Fish don't usually come in that far."

"No. It ain't fish. A fish cain't make a bubble."

Kirkwall pointed. "There it goes again. Always in the same place, too."

Tatum nodded, frowning. "Ain't nobody drowned there, is they?"

Kirkwall moved his head a little, breathing slowly. "You smell anything, Tatum?"

The little man sampled the air, looking solemn while he thrust his neck out and moved in a slow semicircle. "Apples," he said. Then he remembered the pail in his hand. He set the apples on the ground and tried again. "Kinda smells like something," he said vaguely. "Smoke maybe, like driftwood that's afire."

Kirkwall nodded. "Sort of a sweetish smell?"

"That's right. Kind of sweet, like. Sam got to smellin' something like that back in the grass." He took up his pail of apples. "Come along, Sam." He looked around, but the dog did not appear. "He must of gone to sleep back there."

Kirkwall walked with him through the tangled grass along the orchard row. "Back here, you say, your dog smelled something?"

"That's right. Back here a ways. Sam!" he lifted his thin voice. "Come along, Sam!"

Then they saw him lying in the matted grass, his muzzle pillowed on his paws and two gray horseflies buzzing noisily about his ears.

"Sam! Come, Sam!" the old man said. "I never knowed

him to sleep so hard. Hi, Sam!" And he dug a foot into the dog's belly.

Something made him bend down suddenly. "Sam," he said in another voice. "Sam, Sam." He put a hand on the animal's head, and it was limp to his touch. He looked up blankly at Kirkwall. "Sam's dead."

Kirkwall bent down beside him. With a thumb and forefinger he opened the dog's eye; the big brown marble showed glassy and blank.

Tatum's hand closed on the dog's limp ear. "I told you not to go to sleep, Sam." He turned to Kirkwall. "He died while he was sleepin'."

Kirkwall turned from the dog to the matted orchard grass, parting the tangle to look at the cracked summer earth at its roots. He put his face close to the ground and drew a thoughtful breath.

"He died while he was sleepin'," Tatum repeated as though that called for some response.

"Maybe he did," Kirkwall said. "And maybe he didn't. But he's dead now, that's sure. What are you going to do with him?"

Tatum looked uncertain. "I'll have to dig him a place," he said finally.

"Better not wait long," Kirkwall said, "this weather." Already the two big flies had become a dozen, and they were swarming loudly under the orchard boughs.

"You don't think he might wake up?" Tatum asked hopefully.

"No chance of that. He was an old dog, anyway, wasn't he?"

"I don't know."

"Couldn't you tell by his teeth?"

"He never had teeth since I had him."

"You did pretty well, then, to keep him so long."

Tatum nodded. He got slowly to his feet and bent down for his pail of apples. His thin nose sniffed audibly. Still bent, he looked up at Kirkwall. "Seems like I smell that smoke again."

Kirkwall bent beside him, and the two inhaled earnestly. Kirkwall nodded. "That's it. Sweetish."

Tatum took his pail and shuffled off, remembering with a start the cabbage boiling on his stove. "Come along, Sam," he said out of habit, and then his eyes looked startled over his shoulder at the quiet dog in the grass. Two or three times he glanced back before the laden orchard boughs hid him from sight.

Kirkwall breathed once more, thoughtfully, before he turned away. Still testing that taint in his mind, he went to the Homestead. Rosemary was on the porch; she glanced up from the writing desk. "I want to look up a book in the study." And Kirkwall passed through the hall. In his father's office, a paneled study room with windows looking on the terrace, his eyes went over the green back of the encyclopedia and stopped at FORAMINIFERA—GLACE BAY. He found the place and began to read:

Natural gas is usually found in sedimentary formations, unbroken by faults and but little folded or otherwise disturbed. Exception to this is the occurrence of gas with salt domes in Louisiana and with faulted beds in California. The conditions favorable to this are a porous rock to serve as a reservoir, a cap rock to hold it, and the proper structure to encourage concentration.

His eyes lifted from the page and gazed thoughtfully across the terrace toward the swirl of apple boughs beyond. Then he swung around to the telephone on the walnut desk.

"Long Distance. . . . Get me the offices of the Buckeye Gas Company in Cleveland."

He went out to the veranda, waiting impatiently for the call, and found his brother there.

"Sterling," he said abruptly, "how would you like to go to Cleveland with me tonight?"

"Tonight?" Sterling looked surprised. "What for?"

"Well, I'm not sure yet. But it may be something real."

"What are you talking about?" Sterling asked. He was sometimes irritated by his brother, restless, impulsive, never feeling fatigue no matter how hard he drove himself, and what was worse never thinking that everybody else wasn't as stout a horse as he.

Then the phone rang sharply, and Kirkwall was gone.

6

Jonas Bradley had his father's tireless body, and he was fully as big a man; but in another sense he did not have Roger's stature. Life had been easier for him; perhaps that was the reason. There hadn't been any choices to make; he did the obvious thing. He had worked and managed the farm in a routine way, without dreaming any dreams about it, and without any personal triumphs. There had been no disasters either, except the mild slow disaster of raising a family that was all girls. Like other moderately

successful farmers he would never admit that the farm had yielded a cent of profit. "Just enough for seed next season," he insisted.

He was a lean tall man, slightly stooping, with a fine forehead and a red, wrinkled neck. His gray eyes had acquired a permanent squint from working in fields bordered by the lake's broad light. The expression was misleading: it suggested a shrewdness he did not possess. He had patience, and a knack for farming, and a kind of solid contentment that showed in the way he handled tools and harness, but he was innocent of calculation. Life had been generous in giving him a sense of doing what mattered most and had most meaning. But he had never reflected on this.

Now he was pointing over the pasture. "That field we had in alfalfa. It did some forty ton, and a dry summer, too. We're going to get some of them beef cattle from Arkansas or some place. Fatten 'em up and send 'em to the Cleveland stock yards. There's plenty of feed here and no place to sell it. We've got a new foreman, you know. It's his idea." He turned to Alan. "Looks like we better fatten you up, son. You've fell off bad. Prob'ly didn't get the proper things to eat over there. Where is it you've been —Paris?"

"No. London, mostly."

"Well, it's good you got back here before you wasted away. If you'd stay around now, we'd give you a job tending those Texas steers. But the girls say you're going off again."

"Yes, I only have a few more days."

"Don't know as I blame you," Jonas said. "Farming don't

pay any more. Course we still got the place, and I guess that's something. They say the business men have lost more than they can make in ten-twenty years. We don't get behind, but it seems like we can't get ahead. It costs all a crop is worth to raise it. Take a big place like this, we have to pay a foreman and four-five hands all the time. And if you've got a little profit that goes into machinery."

Alan nodded. He felt vaguely flattered to have his uncle take him into his confidence like this. Perhaps it was because he had been away and now he seemed a man of the world and fit to be talked with about a man's problems and a man's concerns.

"What is it you're going to do now? Some job in Chicago, the girls said."

"Yes. I'm going to work in a library there."

Jonas looked puzzled. "I always figured that was woman's work."

"Yes, it usually is. But this job is a bit different."

"How's it different?"

"I mean it's not stamping cards in the back of a book."

"Well, I'm glad of that," Jonas said, relieved. He looked across the pasture again. "Here comes Ursula." He had been unusually talkative, and now he was silent.

Ursula approached in her lonely graceful movement, walking with her head held up, the Murdock way. She came directly to them, her eyes on Alan, and in her face was a wistful childish pleasure. "Where's Jo-Jo?" she said in her strangely gentle voice.

Alan walked off with her, giving his uncle a silent nod of parting. The two of them were soon knee-deep in the

pasture grass and Alan was picking big black-eyed daisies as he walked. He gave a bunch to Ursula. Her eyes showed her pleasure and she added to them, bending in her stride to break the strong green stems. The bruised stalks left a pleasant musky fragrance in the air.

7

Kirkwall Bradley stood in the early morning sunlight on the beach, stripped to the waist, his shoulder muscles bunching as he swung his axe on a driftwood log. Over the sleeping terrace the sounds came *K'chunk, k'chunk,* a soft sound with a hard core, as the bright blade bit through the silver gray to the dark green body of the water-soaked piling. *K'chunk, k'chunk.* . . . After the blade was raised again the delayed dull note reached the barnyard where the men were driving the cows in for milking.

Jonas listened for a moment, standing in the barn's long shadow looking up at the peaked roof where the hayfork waited the new coming of alfalfa. "At it again," he thought to himself, and he wondered briefly at his half-brother who kept a farmer's hours on a vacation. An hour later Jonas went out to the shore pasture and there he heard the axe sound again. Looking over the sand bank, he saw Kirkwall chopping out the old maple stump that had lain there thirty years.

Kirkwall looked up, "Morning, Jonas," he said, leaning on his axe and breathing so that his naked chest rose and fell.

"Morning," Jonas said.

"You haven't got any plans for this stump, have you?"

"Can't say's I have."

"It will make some good fire logs if I can break it up."

"There's plenty better in the wood lot," Jonas said. "Easier to cut up."

"Well, I don't mind that." The axe rose and fell.

Jonas was turning away when his name was called. "I want to see you sometime this morning—when I can get my brothers together. You going to be around?"

"I'm always around," Jonas said, with a plain rebuke to the whole Murdock tradition.

"I'll look for you then."

Jonas went back to the house and breakfast, wondering. What could the Murdocks want of him? He shook his head. Must be something about the farm. Since the old man's last sickness, things had seemed different somehow. He shook his head again, and looked over his shoulder to see Kirkwall, a chunk of that maple stump on his shoulder, crossing the terrace toward the Murdock house. He shook his head once more and went in to breakfast.

Down on the beach, when the wood had been carried up, Kirkwood kicked off his damp duck trousers and plunged into the morning surf. He swam out a hundred yards with a vigorous crawl, rolling his face in the green water and gulping a mouthful of breath at each stroke. He turned on his back and came in with a white threshing of his feet, using his hands like fins to give him guidance. With a last submerging he got the sand under him and straightened in the knee-deep water, throwing the hair out of his eyes with a flip of his head. On the sand, he rubbed the water

off his arms and legs and stepped into his ducks. With his shoes in his hands he climbed the terrace, stopping there to breathe a dozen measured breaths while his eyes scanned the empty horizon of the lake.

He looked right against the broad terrace with the barns and the Ocean County fields beyond, burned face, broad shoulders, straight features, and strong black eyebrows twisted above deep blue eyes—he wasn't alien. He looked young; some of Roger Bradley's strength had found its way to him, softened but not diminished by the Hill School and Yale College and nearly twenty years in a suite of offices above Euclid Avenue.

He could make quick shifts—one day up to his neck in work in Cleveland, the next morning at daylight swinging an axe on driftwood and going barefoot, his body gleaming and untoweled, across the terrace, tracking sand into the kitchen to order a double-sized breakfast from the sleepy cook.

He was not by habit an early riser, but something at the Homestead got him out at a farmer's hour. When he was a boy it had happened, strangely sometimes, a broad awakening at three o'clock on a starlit night and something taking him out on the terrace to breathe the air so hungrily, filling his body deep with it while the stars blazed silent over the lake's darkness. Now it might be the same restlessness—a sense of something waiting; something to be discovered.

After a solitary breakfast, before the family had appeared, he was off to the orchard. Two hours later he found his brothers together, Sterling in a flannel jacket and Ansel in

his tweeds. He explained to Ansel briefly, "there's natural gas on this place."

"Sure," Ansel put in drily.

Kirkwall didn't feel like indulging this rural humor. "There's lots of it, and there is money in it. The field men are back there in the orchard now. They want to sign a lease right away. They'll do it on a royalty basis."

Sterling was opening his mouth to speak but his brother didn't stop. "We've got to get father to agree."

"Right away," Sterling put in. "Let's go up and see him."

"No," Ansel said, sounding like the country doctor. "Better wait till he's had his breakfast."

They waited impatiently while Grandpa finished his late breakfast and was wheeled into the study with the *Plain Dealer* on his lap. He put his paper down when the three of them came in.

"Father," Kirkwall began, "there's natural gas on this land. It's coming up in the orchard and out in the lake. The Buckeye Gas Company has surveyed it and they think it's worth developing. They'll do the work and pay us a royalty. They want us to sign the lease right away."

The old man took off his steel-rimmed glasses, and his eyes looked very strange as he searched the three faces before him. He tightened his mouth. "Why should I make this farm into a gas factory?"

Kirkwall didn't choose to answer the question. "Maybe you don't think there's gas here?"

"I knew that fifty years ago. This shore was a marsh for a thousand years. There's gas in it all right."

"Yes," Kirkwall insisted, "that's the point. It has been

accumulating. Now is the time to develop it. They have gas lines all through these counties, and the wells are giving out. The price is higher than it's ever been. This is the time."

Roger put them off until his sons declared themselves flatly. "We need help. If we don't get it we may be wiped out. You're the only man to turn to. You won't sell the farm and you won't mortgage any of it to help us, but here's a chance to use one of its products so as to clear a profit, a big profit."

Roger was looking away from them now. His gaze went through the west window across the terrace to the orchard where the apple trees stood in their quiet grace. In a quick picture he saw the trees uprooted, the ground scarred and overturned, the skeleton towers, drill rigs, and the squat gray drums of tanks. It was not a pleasant picture.

"It isn't asking you to sell it," Sterling said. "We'll never ask you that again."

The old man brought his gaze to the three of them waiting on his word. He saw them now with a singular freshness, and his gray eyes met the face of each frankly and square. Sterling, ambitious and troubled, his hair gray already and his face webbed with fatigue: the world he had chosen to take his part in was not easy, not so easy, perhaps, as Roger's world of earth and sky, the slow yield of the land to a man's will; Ansel Crain, serious beneath his half-amused eyes, shrewd, patient—Roger knew that he had put every bit of his capital into the Murdock ventures; Kirkwall, most perhaps like himself, a strong man, stubbornly retaining youth, retaining strength and resourcefulness, unbeaten—

but there were shadows of uncertainty even in those deep blue eyes.

Roger's gaze shifted back to the window, and the soft boughs of laden apple trees were graceful in the sunlight. He had drained the land, grubbed out the brush, plowed deeply through its hummock grass, and torn out the yellow sassafras and alder roots. He thought about his sons waiting for his answer. Would they ever know what he had known—the intimate struggle with earth, the simple work of producing for life's need, the dignity of labor for provision? The old man was not sentimental; he was thinking in the only terms he knew. He had found life good, and he wanted it that way for his descendants. The orchard trees faded. He saw in their place a tank farm, the skeletons of derricks never blossoming in spring. But his own sons were pressed and frightened. The world out there, beyond his fences, was a drastic battle ground. A man might call for help.

"All right," he said at last. "I'll agree on one condition. You'll have to get agreement all around. This place isn't mine much longer: it belongs to all of you, and if you're agreed you'll all share alike in the royalties; but you'll have to have five signatures."

"That means Jonas," Kirkwall said.

"That means Jonas," the old man repeated.

In a few minutes they had an agreement drawn up with a space for five signatures after the names of Sterling, Kirkwall, Ursula, Rosemary, and Jonas. "I'll sign for Ursula," the old man said, and with an uncertain hand he made the letters.

An hour later the three of them set off like unwilling schoolboys through the lake pasture for Jonas's. "He'll be looking for us," Kirkwall said. "I told him this morning we'd be around to see him."

"How did you know that?" Sterling demanded.

"I guessed what father would say."

Ansel favored his brother-in-law with an appreciative smile, and then their faces all grew self-conscious as they stood at Jonas's door.

But Jonas was not at the house. One of the girls directed them to the alfalfa field, and stared after them suspiciously as they went on. They were vaguely pleased not to talk to him in his own house, a place they had never visited before. It would be a more businesslike and impersonal meeting in a hayfield.

Jonas pushed his straw hat back on his damp head and listened silently. After one wary, puzzled look at the delegation, he kept his eye on the hayracks loading in the center of the big field.

"Natural gas, you say," he repeated when Kirkwall had explained the plan.

"Yes, and from all signs there's enough to make it worth a good deal of money. Probably more than the farm could make in a man's lifetime."

"Yes," Jonas agreed promptly. "Farming don't pay much now-days."

"The Buckeye Gas Company is ready to sign a lease and start developing right away. It happens they're running out of pressure in their lines up this way, and they're

anxious to locate some new wells. There never was a better time to make a contract."

Jonas put an alfalfa stem between his teeth. "What have I got to do with it?"

They brought out the contract, and his eyes narrowed as he read it in the strong sun. "We're all to share equally in the royalties. Father has agreed to it if we all sign. There's nothing lacking now except your signature. That's what we came for." Kirkwall held the contract and Sterling uncapped a fountain pen.

Jonas chewed harder on the grass stem. His glance went over the three men waiting for him and then swung across the hayfield printed in the gray-green stubble with the meandering track of the loading wagons. "Well," he said slowly, "I'll have to think it over."

Sterling's voice rose a shade. "What is there to think about? It's as much to your advantage as to ours. You'll have as big a share as any."

Ansel intoned in a soothing voice: "Nothing to lose, Jonas. Everything to gain."

Jonas looked from one to another of them deliberately. For the first time in his life he felt clearly superior to his half-brothers. Now they were coming to him, asking for his signature. He relished the situation. "I'll have to think it over," he repeated.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," Kirkwall said. "I'll get the Company to draw up a form including their terms and figures. We'll have it all ready to sign, and then we'll bring it to you."

"I'll have to think it over," Jonas said again. His eyes broke into many wrinkles and narrowed slowly as he watched his brothers tramp away.

8

Tatum Young was sitting on his stoop, his blue eyes narrowed from the afternoon light as he followed the swift and intermittent current on U.S. Number 20.

"Where's Sam?" Alan asked, as the old man made room for him on the stoop.

"Sam?" The little man threw a glance over his shoulder before he said, "Oh, why, I jest buried him this morning."

"You mean Sam's dead?"

"Yep. He's dead."

"How did he die?"

"Well, I cain't jest say. He went to sleep in the orchard and when I come back he was dead. Likely it was gas that did it. They said there was gas comin' up out of the ground. Course Sam didn't have much life left in him."

Alan was puzzled to know how gas got into the orchard.

"Oh, there's gas comin' up cracks in the ground. Out in the water, too. You ever see bubbles out there by the sand bar?"

"Yes, lots of times."

"Well, they say it's gas comin' up. They had a surveyor here already. He looked the place over and said it's natural gas. They mean to sell it, if I got the idea right."

"You mean they'd drill and pipe it out?"

Tatum nodded, while his eyes noted a Pennsylvania number and his hand groped for his tablet.

"That's quite a job, isn't it?"

Tatum had worked on Hardin County farms when gas lines were developed there. "Yep, it's a big job. They drill wells and run pipe lines. Set up big tanks too, if I remember. It's hell on a farm, but I guess it pays better'n apples. Maybe your gramp wouldn't think so, though," he added, squinting his blue eyes shrewdly.

Alan shook his head. "I don't think he would."

They sat there together, their eyes wandering off to the orchard, and in both of their minds was a picture of naked drill rigs that might replace the swirl of apple trees in foliage. Alan shook his head to himself. No, Grandpa would never do it.

While he was thinking, Ursula appeared, a tall dark shadow among the trees. She saw Alan and approached the small stone house.

Tatum grunted. "Here she comes again. She makes me feel like I stole her cat."

She came direct to the stoop and stood before them. "Where's Jo-Jo?" she asked, searching the old man's face.

"Damn if I know," Tatum said uneasily.

Alan got up. "I'll go and have a look around the orchard with her."

Ursula's face brightened. "Where's Jo-Jo? Where's Jo-Jo?" she asked eagerly, her eyes on Alan.

"I'm sorry about your dog, Tatum. You'll miss him."

"Yep, that's a fact. Seems like I cain't get use' to not havin' him around."

"Come on, Ursula," Alan said. Together they struck through the wood lot and followed the gravel path past the Bradley headstones under the clump of cedars. Then they were in the orchard, Alan searching the ground for windfalls and Ursula not far away among the laden trees. Alan bent under the branches bowed with heavy fruit. The early apples were beginning to come down. Frequently he picked up a Yellow Bellflower or a Red Astrachan lying in the tangled grass. When his pockets were full he took off his sweater, knotting the arms to make a bag of it. It was a good apple year; soon Jonas would have his squad of men there with stepladders and the apples would be piled high in bushel boxes between the trees. Then the long apple shed would hold a fruity fragrance, the conveyor would rumble softly while it sorted out the sizes, and over the brown mash the bumblebees would circle loudly while the cider mill pressed the golden syrup into tall glass jars.

While he sank his teeth into the red cheek of a Russet, Alan heard a step behind him. He turned to find Donna, bare-armed and bareheaded in a short white tennis skirt and with a racket in her hand.

"Give me a bite," she demanded, and her white teeth bit off a crisp corner of the apple.

"Here, try one of these." Alan held out a Yellow Bellflower. "They're sweeter."

She dropped it into a net bag with her tennis balls. "I've got a tennis date now. But I want to tell you something. Will you meet me here at five o'clock?"

"Of course." Alan's eyes searched her face. "Something unpleasant?"

"I can't tell you now. But I'll be here at five. Right here."

"I'll be waiting for you," Alan said, and he watched her disappear among the trees. When he turned back to the apples at his feet, he wondered why all at once the orchard seemed so empty.

For a while he looked curiously at the ground, thinking of the gas that had seeped up where Tatum's dog had lain. He breathed slowly to test the air, but he found nothing beyond the faint dry trace of grasses and the furtive sweetness of bruised and ripening fruit. Through the trees he saw Ursula. She was picking up apples, polishing them on her flowing skirt, and keeping two, one in each hand, a red and a yellow apple whose colors pleased her. When she found a new one she polished it carefully and then pondered on whether to discard it or to substitute it for one of those she carried.

When he had filled his sweater, he left Ursula wandering through the orchard rows and carried the apples home. His mother cut one through with a paring knife and showed the brownish seeds.

"They're still pretty green, but they'll make a good pie. If those people weren't there, I'd send a piece over to Grandpa. He always enjoys apple pie. Well," she added, "they'll be gone next week, anyway."

"Who'll be gone?" Alan asked.

"The whole lot of them over there. They always go the first week in September."

"Oh," Alan said.

"It never seems like home when they're around," his mother went on. "They keep Grandpa shut up all they can,

and they have a crowd out on the shore half the time. It never seems like home till they're gone again."

"Yes," Alan agreed, "it makes the place quite different."

"You could certainly tell it," his mother said, and she was careful not to look at him, "spending so much time out there on the shore." Then she added, as though it was an afterthought: "Was that Donna sitting with you yesterday?"

"Yes, that was Donna."

"I thought so. Only I couldn't quite think it was, either."

Alan saw the deep perplexity in her face, and he knew what she must be thinking. And he knew she would not speak of it again. Perhaps she had felt the whole bitter weight of it most heavily, the long slow years of estrangement, bearing it alone after his father's death. In her face he saw the bewilderment and trouble and the pride too, a deep pride too silent ever to make a protest, and he felt more deeply sad than ever before at the blind folly of that quarrel.

Now he tried to think of some new thing. "Where's Carl?" he asked finally.

His mother's eyes changed, as though she too were leaving some unsettled matter in her mind. "Carl? Why, he went off with Jonas in the truck. Something they were getting at the station."

For Carl, that was a sign of desperation. He never took a hand in farm activities unless he was driven to it by lack of any other thing to do. And yet he couldn't occupy himself for long, so that he was compelled at last to wander across to the barns or the fields where men were working and soon he would be taking a dull part, with his mind absent from it.

For a time they talked about Carl's ship and his plan to teach in a navigation school during the winter, after the lakes were closed to shipping. Then his cousin Ann came over from Jonas's to return a borrowed crochet pattern, and she stayed to talk about the new minister in the church at Pride's Crossing.

So Alan waited for the afternoon to pass, and the time went very slowly. Long before the hour, he was in the orchard blowing whistles of sawgrass and watching through the trees for Donna to come. He wandered close to the edge of the orchard where the gravel path ended in the clump of cedars and the fading headstones marked the Bradley graves. Then he saw her coming over the grass.

She wore a green skirt and an orange blouse, and her face had two high spots of color. Her hair was damp, with the comb marks still showing in it.

"Just had a swim," she said. "And I hurried. I'm not late, am I?"

"No, I came early."

"Come on," she said, taking his hand. "Let's go through the orchard."

They walked in silence over the wild grass with the faint tang of ripening apples above them and the long shadows thrown across the ground. When they came out at the shore they tightened their hands and slid down the bank, digging their heels into the sandy slope. On the beach they stopped, their eyes full of light.

Donna stood on one foot with a shoe in her hand. "Fun, isn't it?" And she watched the thin white cascade flow out. But her mind was not on the sand. She had something

to say that she had not said, and both of them were conscious of it.

"I was just wondering," Alan said, "when was the last time I'd done this."

"Probably ten years ago when you and your brother chased us out of the orchard. You wouldn't let us come near the place when you were picking apples. Remember?"

"Maybe. But I can't think why we should have chased you."

"Sletters and Murdocks."

"I suppose so. It seems so unreasonable though, I wonder if that was the reason."

"Oh, it *was* all right, and it's not unreasonable. Not to the rest of them. They think they're right. A holy war." She looked up with a faint smile. "There was a Holy War in history, wasn't there?"

Alan searched her face. "You mean your mother doesn't like me?"

"Well, she says I'm making a fool of the family. As if they hadn't made fools of themselves for forty years," she added hotly.

"She told you not to see me."

"Yes, it amounted to that."

"Why is it, Donna? Why do they carry it on so long?"

"You know. Property. The farm. My side is scared to death your side will get it."

"I don't see why it matters so much as all that."

She put a hand on his arm. "You wouldn't see why, Alan. You're too good. But it matters. They're all scared of business now. Uncle Sterling has a stock report telephoned

from Cleveland every morning, and Uncle Kirk had to let his new house go for half it cost him, and father isn't sending Ruth to boarding school this fall. The farm looks better to them now than it's ever looked. And Grandpa is on the ragged edge. Don't you see why it matters to them?"

Alan shook his head wearily. "It's no good talking about it. I see that much."

"I understand it a lot better than I did, since mother cut loose on me. They're too proud to forget a quarrel. And besides that they're afraid you'll get the farm, and that makes them hate the thought of you."

"It's not fair," Alan said, his eyes going over the lake.

"You can't be fair to people you're afraid of."

Alan's eyes came back. "We're not afraid though."

"No, but maybe we would be if you were Uncle Jonas and I were Aunt Katherine. We're not afraid because we don't have to worry yet. And because we know each other," she added simply.

"Do we? This afternoon I wondered. I wondered what you were doing and what your thoughts were like and what feelings were inside you. I watched you go through the apple trees, and I wondered if I knew you at all. It seems funny too, because now I think I know all those things."

"What things, Alan?"

"How you feel and what your thoughts are."

"What are they then?"

He shook his head, smiling. "Oh, I wouldn't try to prove it."

"Well," she said, frowning, "my thoughts weren't on tennis this afternoon."

"Where were they?"

She hesitated. "On you. I thought of you up here in the orchard with Ursula. I wished I were here. It seemed to me you have a lot more interesting life than the rest of us."

"Hm-m," Alan grunted. "That's a funny thing to say."

"Why is it funny?"

"Well, because I don't do anything. I only leave the house because I can't find much to say to Carl and he's so restless to get back to his ship he doesn't think of anything else. He's not much of a talker anyway. So, you see—" he finished.

"Yes, but I still think it. You see things that others don't see, and you feel what they don't feel." Her eyes widened, childishly. "Oh, I admire you awfully."

Alan looked uneasy, digging his foot into the wet sand. "That's nonsense, Donna."

"Ursula doesn't think so."

He looked up, surprised and thoughtful. "She doesn't think at all, you know." Then he pointed along the shore to a great tree lying at the water's edge. "There's the old sycamore that blew down five years ago. The water has hollowed out its trunk. Let's go down and see it."

They fell silent again as they went over the hard-packed sand. Still Donna had not said what she meant to say, and Alan realized it. Beyond the fallen sycamore they could see the swimming pier of the Randall Beach Club with people, dressed and idle, moving on it. There the Bradley shore ended and the resorts began.

The sycamore lay half across the beach, the lower end at the water's edge with a dark tunnel showing in its heart.

At the tree's base the cinnamon bark was richly flecked and the white bole of the upper trunk shone in the slanting sun.

Donna studied the tree. "Five years, you say? It still looks alive. Why, see, there are leaves up there on the branches."

Alan nodded. "There's one strip of bark still rooted in the ground, and the rest of it gets water every time there's any surf. Still you'd think it couldn't stay alive so long."

When they had climbed across the tree their eyes went to a bright tin Coca-Cola sign, the magazine cover girl sucking the bubbling syrup through a straw, that had been nailed to the prostrate cinnamon trunk.

Donna's eyes crinkled. "Wouldn't Grandpa like that! It's still the farm here, isn't it?"

"Yes, right up to the Randall line."

"Randall Beach at one end and the Farview on the other." She looked along the quiet Bradley shore. "Well, I like ours best." Then her eyes came back to the tree. "It's sort of like him, isn't it?"

"Who?"

"Grandpa. It's got a strong hold like him."

"Yes. It won't let go."

Donna's face darkened slowly. "Half the time they're afraid he will, and the other half they're afraid he won't. My side, I mean." Then their eyes found each other and she smiled a little ruefully. "There it is, the holy war. And I wasn't going to mention it again."

"But it isn't easy to forget it," Alan said, frowning. "All those years between us."

"How many years, Alan?"

"Forty, I guess. Maybe more. Ever since Ursula—"

Now Donna could speak. "Alan," she said, looking up at him suddenly, "maybe there's a chance to patch things up."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, there's a chance for both sides to agree on something."

He still waited.

"Did you know they found natural gas seeping up in the orchard?"

"Yes, Tatum told me."

"Well, they've had geologists and gas surveyors here, and now a gas company is ready to develop it. They'll pay a royalty and it may be worth a great deal. They're terribly excited. Uncle Kirkwall is racing back and forth to Cleveland and Sandusky, and you can tell by Uncle Sterling's face it's a life-saver to him. All the signs are favorable. They're sure there's profit in it."

"It sounds promising," Alan admitted. "I've seen bubbles in the lake for years. Only I never thought of its being gas."

"They're anxious to start drilling," Donna went on.

"What does Grandpa say?"

"That's the point. Grandpa says he'll sign the lease if they all agree. You see that means Uncle Jonas."

Now she was silent, and Alan asked finally: "Wouldn't he do it?"

"He wouldn't say yes and he wouldn't say no. He said he'd have to think about it."

Into both their minds came a picture of Jonas with his slow words and his tight jaw and the stubborn set of his head.

Donna went on. "It's up to him. You see he's the only one on your side, since your father died."

"And Uncle Timothy has been gone for thirty years," Alan said.

"He's the only one," Donna repeated urgently; "but if he won't sign the agreement it's all off. Even though all the others want to, he can stop the whole thing."

Alan nodded.

"Alan," she said earnestly. "You're one of them. Your father would have had as much to say as Uncle Jonas. You" —her eyes dropped and then came back to his—"you could ask him to sign it."

Alan's face began to settle, and his foot was working in the sand. She clung to his arm. "It isn't fair for one person to stand in all their way. Won't you ask him, Alan? He'd have to listen to you."

Alan's foot worked deeper and deeper into the dark wet sand. "Why do you ask me?" he said finally.

"I'm asking you for Uncle Sterling and Uncle Kirkwall. They're both in business over their heads. They don't say much, but I know father has put up every dollar he can raise. They can't get any help from Grandpa. He won't sell the farm or let them touch any of its income."

"There's not enough of that to pay their margins," Alan said grimly.

"No, and they don't ask him to help them that way. But here's a chance to make a profit without mortgaging an acre. Will you do it, Alan?"

Alan's narrow jaw was setting. "Why should I want to help them out? They've always hated us."

"That's the reason, Alan. That's the real reason. Don't you see? Here's a chance to make them agree on something. Maybe it would put an end to all this hating."

Alan bit his lip and was silent. Finally he said: "That's not the way to put an end to it. If they get what they want they'll hate us all the more, remembering they had to have our help to get it. It wouldn't be any different. They'd still blame my father for what happened to Ursula. It doesn't change that."

"I think it will, Alan. If I didn't think so I wouldn't ask you."

"You think I could make up Uncle Jonas's mind for him?"

"You might help him to see it's reasonable. The farm belongs to all of them. They'll all share in the royalties."

Alan shook his head. "He wouldn't take my advice."

"You could try."

While he stood there Alan felt himself pulled both ways. On the one side was Donna, her eyes on his, her voice earnest, her hope depending on his answer; and on the other the deep long sense of the people he belonged to and the ways he shared. He dug his foot deeper in the sand.

"No," he said finally. "Uncle Jonas knows what he wants to do. I'm not going to try to persuade him. I can't get over on the Murdock side."

He saw her face fall. "All right, Alan."

"I'm sorry, Donna. Don't you see—"

She broke him off, her face frowning. "Let's not say anything more about it."

A supper bell broke out its clangor somewhere above the Randall swimming pier.

Alan still felt the pull of those two forces. "If you knew Uncle Jonas—"

She was already hurrying up the beach. "I'll be late for supper, and mother can read me like a book. She'll know I've been traducing myself again."

9

That afternoon, a message had come to Carl, ordering him to join his ship at Sandusky the next day. The vessel was to load coal for South Chicago. At supper they talked it over.

"I'm lucky they kept the berth for me," Carl said, and his habitually stolid face did not hide his relief and pleasure.

"But Grandpa may get worse again," his mother feared.

"Yes, he probably will, and then get better again. It's been that way a dozen times. I can't stay here all my life because Grandpa is an old man."

"Of course, Carl. Only if you could stay a few days longer—"

"I can't do it though. We sail for Chicago tomorrow night." He turned to his brother, sitting silent across the table. "You'd better come along, Alan."

Alan frowned at his plate. For a moment he busied himself with the cold meat and the escalloped potatoes, but he did not taste the food when he swallowed it.

"It'll be a better trip than by train," Carl insisted. "And we'll get you there in time for your job."

It was reasonable that Alan should go. He had to be in Chicago in four days and though the boat would require

three days and the train but one, it would give him a pleasant voyage and there was the saving of a fare.

"We've got plenty of room in the *Richardson,*" his brother continued. "There are two unused staterooms in the officers' corridor, besides the company's cabins that may not be used at all this trip."

Alan hesitated. Still in his mind was the sharp pull that had taken hold of him on the beach: Donna asking, urging, pleading, and the obdurate family constraint that held him back. He stirred unnecessary sugar into his iced tea and the frown darkened on his face. She had no right to ask him; it was not his affair. A chance for them to agree on something, she had said. But it wasn't that. It was a chance for the Sletters to give in to the Murdocks. It was their scheme, their necessity; and it would be four-fifths their gain if the plan went through. This would mend their difference, she said. But would it? Would anything bring together a family that followed different ways, and lives that had no point of meeting except in suspicion and distrust? Now he saw Donna's face again, asking him to intercede, and he felt her fingers urgent on his arm. And in the same brief picture he saw Jonas Bradley, with his narrowed eyes, his mouth so little used to speaking, and the stubborn thrust of his head.

"All right," he said, looking up at his brother. "I guess it's a good idea. I'll go with you."

So it was settled. His mother made a brief protest, but in it was her acceptance. "It seems you only got here," she said. "And now you're off again."

Her words were in Alan's mind when the meal was done.

He walked out to the end of the hemlock row and sat there thoughtfully while the sun slanted down beyond the point. With a deliberate effort he tried not to remember how Donna had looked when she said, "Don't speak of it any more." He tried not to think of her at all or to remember the difference that lay between them. He had not thought of her when he arrived ten days before, and there was no reason to be thinking of her now. She was one of the other family, on the other side. It wasn't possible to forget it, after all; the years were too many, and the roads too separate. It was a mistake to suppose two people could disregard what had happened during all those years, and what was happening now, with the orchard offering an unguessed gain and the two roads showing all too plainly.

There were other things to think about. His last evening . . . and as he realized it there was no eagerness in his departure. Instead there was a gnawing reluctance, something holding him back. Wondering and a little troubled, he gave his mind to that reluctance. Around him now was the strong hold of the familiar, and it seemed life to be here in this place among the old presences. He understood more clearly the dim need and restlessness that had followed him over English roads and Scottish hills and through the worn streets of European cities. He was no wanderer; he had a place where he belonged, and now he had found it again. In a curiously futile mood he wished he were a man like his father before him, cut out for farming, ready now to begin where the others relinquished, prepared to carry on what his grandfather had begun so many years before.

Then he heard voices across the grounds and he turned

with a surprising eagerness and misgiving. A car was standing in the drive, and Donna, laughing, stepped down from the veranda and was helped into the seat. The next minute they were gone, and Alan's eyes strained, following them through the trees, the bareheaded youth at the wheel and Donna beside him.

All at once the shore seemed less sufficient; the color had drained from the fallen sun and the whole unchanged land seemed somehow empty. Alan coughed quietly and dug his fist into the palm of his restless hand. Perhaps that was it, after all. Perhaps it was Donna. Donna with the warm voice so like this August lake washing in darkness, Donna with the clear eyes and the quick lights in them; not his cousin, a girl he remembered, but this surprising girl with the white throat and the head held high; Donna who could wave a hand so gayly, who could call across the terrace and change the day; Donna who stood in the shadows with tears in her eyes while the Murdocks and Sletters glared at each other in the Homestead; Donna racing up from the beach, her brown legs flashing, her wet suit raining water as she ran, "The water's marvelous, marvelous!" the light then in her eyes and the other words, unuttered (*Don't you know what beats in my blood like music? Don't you hear it? Don't you see what a wide sky leans over me? Don't you see the flowering of time in every instant, the soundless bursting into blossom? Oh, I could tell you things, such things, joy and wonder and desire!*). And deep, deep Alan knew more than in any time before how much he wanted from life, what a lasting hunger it can be.

He shook his head and tried to turn his thoughts away,

but they swung round again to this half-cousin whom he had not remembered as apart from all the others and who now seemed so unlike anybody in the world. The clearness of her eyes, the changes, the sudden play of life, and beneath that quick surface the quiet composure. So different from Alan, so different from all his people who were slow to feel a thing and reluctant to make it known. Donna, he thought, Donna Bradley. She was not beautiful, not brilliant, but so untroubled, so deeply certain of something in herself. Such a security, the kind of security only a woman can possess, the peculiar quickness and understanding, the secret possession, not of power or courage or wisdom but of life—that is a woman's gift and her supreme possession. But it was not strange. It was very simple; it was gladness; it was Donna.

These were disturbing thoughts, and he didn't know how to deal with them. So he sat there wondering how the world could be so beautiful and so sad, and then he heard his cousins' voices from the long veranda of the Homestead. "What's at the movies? Anybody know?"

"I think it's that Arliss picture."

"No, that was Monday and Tuesday. Run down and see what's on."

There was a flash of white skirts under the trees, and soon Phyllis and Ruth were backing a car out of the carriage shed. The ruby light showed for an instant as they braked and then went forward. They swirled around the curving drive and were gone in the dusk. They had only to drive out to U.S. Number 20, lacing its concrete lane across their grandfather's land, and a quarter of a mile along the high-

way to his boundary. There the signboards began, and there all summer was posted the Sandusky moving picture bill.

They were back in two minutes, leaving the car in the drive. "It's Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Who's going?"

Now Alan heard his Uncle Sterling. "It's that dance team. Yes, they say it's good."

There was a movement about the veranda. "Where's Donna?" some one asked.

"She's gone to dance at the Farview."

"Let's get started then."

This time two cars drove out the winding lane, their headlights sweeping in wide arcs through the trees. Then Alan heard voices at his own house, his mother saying, "No, he was here a while ago, but he's gone out somewhere."

They saw him and came out along the line of hemlocks, his cousins Irma and Ann, in their white, full-skirted dresses. They were country girls and their clothes did not belong to them the way the others wore their clothes. They lived a good deal outdoors but they didn't have the rich brown that the other girls acquired after a week in bathing suits. They were stronger probably, and more healthy, but they didn't have the trim figures and the easy movement of their cousins. Alan wondered about it as they approached. Even in the twilight one glance would show the difference.

They wanted him to go to a church social at Pride's Crossing, but Alan declined. As they passed the house again he heard his mother say, "He'd better stay quiet anyway. He's leaving tomorrow, and he needs all the rest he can get." Soon he saw the car drive away from Jonas's house. He

followed it through the trees till it joined the swift current of headlights on the highway.

Now the place was quiet. As he sat there the darkness gathered the houses in a false harmony; he could not forget the bitterness that lay between them. Again he saw Donna's face, hopeful and earnest, and her words repeated themselves in his mind: "Maybe they can agree on something." Restlessly he dug his heels in the sandy earth while he smoked a cigarette in tasteless impatience. A dozen times he shook his head angrily, and then, with that sharp pull still dividing him, he walked through the pasture to his uncle's door. The house was dark, and a sense of relief went through him. But the next minute a light came on in the wagon shed. The pull in his mind grew tighter.

Jonas sat over the grindstone, his shadow swaying grotesquely on the floor as he sharpened a mower blade that had been clattering all day up and down the big alfalfa field. The dull blade would be bright to start the new rounds in the morning. Jonas was a man who kept his implements in order.

He looked up briefly when Alan came in, and grunted a syllable above the grindstone's rumble. Then his foot resumed the treadle's rhythm, his head nodded with it, and the blade sent a thin curl of water upward.

Alan stood there lamely. "I thought I'd tell you goodbye," he said finally.

"Good-bye?"

"Yes. I'm leaving tomorrow. Carl's ship is going to Chicago, and I'm going to make the trip with him."

Jonas stood up and held out a big hand, gritty and wet

from the grinding. Gravely they shook hands. "Good luck to you," Jonas said. "When'll you get back again?"

"Next summer, I guess."

"Well, good-bye," Jonas repeated. He straddled the bench again, his foot on the treadle, the stone turning.

Alan stood there uncertain. At last he said with an effort: "May be some changes around here before I get back."

His uncle looked up from the steel blade. "Changes?"

"I mean the orchard." Jonas's face was lifted, but it gave no help. "They say," Alan went on in a numb voice, "there's an offer for a lease."

"Oh." Jonas turned back to the grindstone. "That's what they say."

"It sounds like a good offer, though."

"Good for what?"

"Well, good for profit."

"Profit for who?"

"For the farm."

Jonas spun the wheel and ground two teeth bright before he looked up again. "There's nobody thinking about the farm. They're thinking about their own hides, their loans and mortgages."

Alan was silent. His uncle ground two more teeth. "They never had a thing to do with this place all these years. Now they think there's some quick money on it, and so they get excited. Well, it don't seem so exciting to me."

"If it's good business, though," Alan said, "it's natural they'd be interested."

Jonas went on with his grinding.

"It's a reasonable business proposition, isn't it?" Alan

insisted. His face burned and he felt like a traitor, and he couldn't look at his uncle swaying over the grindstone in the hanging light.

"Maybe it is. I can't say."

"There's nothing to lose, is there?"

"Orchard."

"Yes, but if there's gas, there'll be a lot to gain."

"Maybe."

Alan stared at his own shadow stretched on the floor. He frowned at it and his mouth seemed stiff as he got the words ready. "Are you going to sign the agreement?"

Jonas looked up from trying the ball of his thumb on the fresh-ground blade. "I don't know as I am."

"You're going to refuse, then?"

"I don't know that either."

"It doesn't seem unreasonable, does it?"

"The lease, you mean?"

"Yes."

Jonas studied the grindstone. "Well, that depends, Maybe it's good business and still it's unreasonable. Maybe it's unreasonable to see them get what they want. Forty years they been too good for us. They wouldn't even come when we had your father buried. Now maybe it's unreasonable to help them get their mortgages paid up."

Alan was silent.

"Maybe it's unreasonable and maybe not," Jonas repeated. "I can't say. I got to think about it awhile longer."

Alan stood there for another moment, rooted in futility. With a final good-bye he left his uncle bent over the grindstone with a curl of water spraying from the zigzag blade.

On the shore again, he let his mind fill with the darkening sky and the first white stars in the limitless night. Serenity flowed up from the lake, where the day's color was fading, and now it was around the big house and the other houses in the trees. Gradually the mood came to him. His last night . . . and with that consciousness he walked thoughtfully over the silent grounds.

He saw the vine growing up the broad chimney of the Homestead, softening the house and giving it an unreal look of age, for it was not a hundred years since the Indians had camped on this spot when they came to fish through the ice in early March. Through the trees the gravel path showed white, leading back to dimness and the Bradley gravestones. The path was lined with peony bushes and the late blossoms spilled white flakes among the withered iris; Alan remembered how in early summer those stalks stood up with their proud crowns of purple. At the rear of the Homestead, where the curving drive came past, an iron hitching post, leaning a little with age, showed dimly. It was a lion's head, or a boar's head, no telling which, with a ring in its rusted mouth. That was the important part, a ring worn with the tie-strap of Grandpa's driving team. The hitching post belonged to the time when gigs and surreys and storm carts and spring wagons filled the carriage shed, before the blue vapor of motor exhausts had overcome the reek of leather and varnish and the faint good taint of horse manure, before the floor, once powdered with that yellow film, had darkened with the drip of cylinder oil.

Back on the terrace Alan looked up at the lighted window where the old man lay. Now he was alone in the big house, with a nurse stationed somewhere, and the

grounds were all deserted. The Murdocks had gone to the movies and the Sletters to the church social, and the place was as quiet as when Grandpa had found it seventy years before. The lake was vast and empty in the growing dark, but faintly through the trees passed the long penciled lights of the highway traffic. In his mind Alan saw people going to meetings, to assemblies, to church gatherings and moving picture theaters. He sat down under the wild apple tree and he thought about the gregarious America, the nation of people living a vast community existence. He saw clearly this peculiar restlessness, as though American folk had a gnawing need to be together, to hear each other's voices, to be doing things in numbers, even to be sitting quiet in the dark watching pictures on a screen. No one would do that alone. But with six hundred others breathing in the darkness, with the feel of all those rows of people, the repeated attention in all those lifted faces, it was an institution. There was more than Fred Astaire among the palms in a tiled courtyard with the blue stars mirrored in the pools; there was the strong crowd comfort, so grateful, so appeasing. As he thought of that crowd comfort Alan was puzzled to know why he had chosen another and a narrower way. Why should any one strive for excellence and meaning? Strange objects, and perhaps one never truly found them. Other goals were so much nearer and more comforting, and so much easier to understand. But he had faced another way. He reminded himself, looking out to where Cassiopeia made the great slow circle in the enormous dark; the right feeling, the right thinking, what else is there in the world so real?

Then he heard the music begin at the hotel down the

shore, and he couldn't think clearly. He coughed quietly and went to the house.

10

At midnight he woke, and he lay there broad awake with the locusts loud in the maple outside his window. A soft wind stirred his curtains and he heard faintly the music from the hotel a quarter of a mile away. He pictured Donna in that ballroom, Donna in a chiffon dress and a man in a dark coat and white flannels; in the intermissions they would walk out to the gardens, breathing the air made cool with midnight and the lake. He was very much awake as he saw that picture, and now he knew plainly what restlessness had followed him that evening and why he had waked at last. The music came again, faintly through the shadows on the night wind, and with it the wash of water as though far away. All at once he was out of bed and putting on his clothes.

Quietly he left the house. Under the trees he passed and along the terrace in a ghostly light of the wan ascending moon. In a minute he was abreast of Uncle Jonas's house, vague among its shadows, and then he came against the fence that bounded the horse pasture. There he slid down the sand bank to the shore and when his shoes were emptied of sand he walked on the hard beach where the surf showed a faint white moving. It was cooler there. His shirt was open and the wind strayed in his hair. The music stopped once and began again.

The hotel lights grew nearer and soon he was walking

through the garden paths and climbing the broad steps of the veranda. Through the open windows music drifted, and now he saw the weaving couples in the softly lighted hall. He stood in a doorway, his eyes searching. Quickly he found her, her head held up, the clear line of her throat against a man's dark shoulder. Before he realized what he meant to do, she saw him standing there. Their eyes met for a moment. Then her head turned and her lips were moving, and she was hurrying across the room.

"What is it, Alan? Is Grandpa worse again?"

"No," Alan said quickly. "Not at all."

"Is he dead? Tell me."

"No, honestly. It isn't Grandpa at all. I'm sorry Donna."

She waited. "Weren't you looking for me?"

"Oh, yes. But it hasn't anything to do with him."

"Who is it then?"

Alan hesitated. "Me, I guess. I wanted to see you. Funny thing to do, isn't it? I do want to talk to you though. When can I?"

"Any time. Any time you say, Alan."

"Well, I wanted to see you again, and this seemed to be the last chance."

Her voice lifted. "The last chance?"

"You see I'm leaving tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?"

"Yes. Carl's boat is going to Chicago, and I'm to make the trip with him." Abruptly the music stopped and the first couples brushed past them. "I wanted to see you once more, Donna. This seemed the only way."

"Of course, Alan. I'd want you to."

"How long does this last? The dance, I mean."

"Oh, that doesn't matter. I don't have to stay."

"Will you go back with me? Can you?" He nodded toward the floor.

"Of course I can."

"Seems dirty," Alan smiled. "I wouldn't like it if I were him."

"It'll be all right. He knows Grandpa's sick. I'll fix that. Wait just a minute."

She reappeared quickly, and her eyes were laughing. "It was as easy as that"—and she snapped her fingers. "It's good to get outside—all this moon going to waste." She turned her face up to the late moon, one-sided, far down the shore.

In a moment they were on the sand, the cool wind about them and the little murmur of surf filling the darkness. Behind them the hotel diminished and the music grew half real. With the darkness closing around, drawing them together in the large night of sea and sky, Alan recalled their strained parting on the beach; it seemed so much longer than six hours ago. He was silent, remembering, and it was Donna who first spoke.

"Tell me again. Why do you have to go?"

"Carl's boat is going to Chicago," he repeated. "It seemed sensible for me to make the trip with him. I'd have to go anyway in a couple of days."

She did not speak for a moment, and then her voice was low and quiet like the surf. "I'll miss you, Alan."

"Look!" he said, pointing over the lake. "Did you see it? A falling star."

"Yes. So bright, wasn't it? And so brief."

"It ought to mean something."

She looked closely at him in the darkness. "What, Alan?"

"Us, maybe."

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, I've been silly tonight, Donna."

The way he spoke her name called her eyes to him. "How?"

"Thinking of you."

"Thinking what?"

"You'd be surprised to know. I'm sure I was."

A flow of wind brought the music nearer. A voice came faintly, singing:

Hold me forever
Close to your heart;
Forsake me never;
Ever and ever
I will be true to you,
Always, Sweetheart.

They stood together, hearing the quiet water when the song had ceased, and then it came again, *Love Me Forever* —and neither of them was ever to forget the ache in that cheap music, the surf's low trouble, and the longing in the night. All at once Alan held her in his arms. "It's no use, Donna. I can't keep from saying it. I love you, I love you, I love you."

She looked up at him, and her eyes were shining. "Say it again, Alan. Oh, I've wanted you to say it."

Her hair was misted with moonlight when he kissed her,

and his voice breathed against her face. "I love you so."

"I love you, too, Alan." And her eyes were brighter than he had ever seen them.

"Do you mean it? Do you mean it, Donna, this way?"

"I never meant anything so much."

"Listen, Donna. Just as soon as I knew I was going, I couldn't think of anything but you. I tried not to, but I couldn't help it. I went to sleep and it woke me up. I had to see you."

She looked up at him, her mouth parted. "I'm glad you came, Alan. I'm so glad."

He kissed her again, and then he shook his head a little ruefully. "There was something else I wanted to tell you."

"What?"

He hesitated, and in the darkness his foot was digging at the sand. "About this afternoon. I was stubborn and selfish. I'm sorry. You don't know how sorry."

She took his face in her hands and brought his eyes to hers. "I understand. It's all right. Let's not think of it now."

He bit his lips and stared over the dark sweep of water. All at once he drew her close to his mouth again. "Oh, Donna, I love you! I'd do anything, even that. I talked to Uncle Jonas this evening. I tried to ask him. But something wouldn't let me. I hate myself for feeling that way."

"It's nothing, nothing. It doesn't matter."

"I tried to ask him to do it. I wanted to ask him. It was the only thing you ever asked me to do, and I couldn't—"

She stopped his mouth with hers. "We love each other, Alan. We mustn't let it touch us, ever."

Slowly they walked over the sand, stopping often to feel the wind in their faces, watching the watery wan scribble of the egg-shaped moon. Slowly into darkness dropped the old starry figures, the Cross and the Crown, and they heard the sough of night wind and the murmuring of surf.

Above them was the terrace with the dark Bradley houses. Now it seemed to Alan that all the others were distant and unknown to him, Sletters and Murdocks alike; the rest of the family were strangers, and beside him was one he had known always. But the shadow of those dark houses seemed to cross the terrace to them, and they were silent.

"What are you thinking about?" Donna asked finally.

"The orchard, and all that business. Oh, I hope Uncle Jonas will agree with them. He said he hadn't decided yet. Maybe I can write to him."

Her hand tightened in his. "Whatever they do, we can't let it touch us, Alan. We mustn't."

"You'll think of me, then? You'll write to me? Will you?"

"Of course. Oh, I'd have to, Alan."

"But they won't like it. We may make it worse between them. You know how they are, how stubborn and proud."

Donna looked bitterly across the terrace. "Oh, Alan," she said, her hands clenching his fingers, "let's never be proud with each other. Let's always be humble."

"Yes, we will. We will."

While they stood there the wind blew fresher, and Alan shook with a brief rack of coughing.

"We mustn't stay out here," she said anxiously. "Your throat is open. You ought to have more clothing."

"How about you? That dress."

"I'm used to it."

He coughed again, and she put her arm in his and hurried him along the shore. For a last moment they stopped, looking at space and darkness and the thin white restlessness of surf.

"I hate to leave it," he said. "This shore will always belong to us, won't it?"

"Yes," she said, following his eyes across the dark. "It will."

Quietly they took the stairs and crossed the terrace. The houses all were dark, the grounds dreaming in shadow and moonlight. They climbed softly up the steps of the Homestead and stood there in the door.

"This is good-bye, Donna. I couldn't go without saying it to you. Are you sorry?"

Her eyes widened. "That you are going?"

"No. That I had to tell you."

"I never was so glad for anything."

Their lips were touching when a sound froze them together. Then a light came quickly round a corner of the porch and Ursula was holding a candle dish and peering at them. At last her mouth shaped itself. "Where's Jo-Jo?" And she passed into the hall.

"Good night," Alan said, his hands reluctant to let her go.

"Good night. Good night, my dear."

IV

American Shores

I

Alan stayed downtown, sitting in the lobby of the Sandusky Hotel while the ship was loading. "No use your breathing all that coal dust," Carl had said. "It'll be bad enough when you come aboard anyway."

At midnight Carl telephoned, and Alan took a taxi through the dark tangle of railroad yards between the lifeless warehouses to the Pennsylvania Coal Docks. When he made his way on foot through a pedestrian viaduct he heard the soft rumble of coal cars, the solid crash and boom of couplings, and then the dusty thunder of sixty tons of Pocahontas flowing into the steamer's hold. Beyond the tunnel was black water, gleaming with flood lights and dappled with the yellow moons of portholes. Like a great fixture in the dock, rising into dimness, was the vast dark body of the ship; above it leaned the loading gear, the skeleton shape softened by a reek of coal dust and of night. Again the rumble of cars, the iron note of wheels on rail, the rapid angry chuffing of the hoist, and a gondola was lifted bodily with its segment of track. When it swung over, the long soft thunder rolled again and a slow cloud dimmed the flood lights at the towers of the rig. Alan peered at the

looming stern above him. Through the satanic murk he spelled a spaced arc of letters on the sloping fantail:

JAMES K. RICHARDSON
WILMINGTON, DEL.

The cement dock was gritty under the frowning hull. Past the stern lines he found the ladder planted against an iron spile and pointing up to the dusty luminance of the deck. The round rungs gritted under his step. A smudged face looked over the rail, and a figure in coal-stained dungarees lifted his bag over.

"Where'll I find Mr. Bradley?" Alan asked.

"Number 5 or 6."

Alan started forward over the long hatch space. His steps rasped with coal dust on the iron deck, and he tasted the sting of it in his nostrils. Around him was the clatter of iron hatch covers as a deck crew slid the big plates over hatchways heaped with coal. He stepped over coils of hose line and strips of wooden batten, and at last he saw a stream of water playing into the dark pocket of Number 6. Carl stood there beside the deck watch with the hose.

"Dirty load," he said for a greeting. "We can't keep the dust down. But it's about all in now." He pointed to the white bulkhead of the forward carbin. "Take the port hallway there. Yours is the second door on the left. It's all ready."

Alan found the room miraculously clean and smelling faintly of its leather settee opposite the built-in bunk and of the cake of lavender soap on the enamel washstand. When he had washed and unpacked his bag he peered out the

porthole. The noise of loading had stopped, but there was no life in the ship; the engines were not turning, and the lights of the loading gear were fixed above dim acres of empty gondolas and gleaming arcs of track. He went on deck.

Carl was standing beside a watchman at the winches. "Here, Alan. I want you to meet Ole Swenson. My brother, Ole."

Ole was a big hulking fellow in dungarees. As he turned to the light, Alan saw a fair boyish face and pale blue eyes very quick with life. He made a stiff little jerk of his head and smiled brightly. "Please' to meet you, Meester Bradley." His voice was as gentle as a girl's.

"All loaded?" Alan asked.

Carl shook his head impatiently. "We just got orders to wait for nine cars more. No telling when they'll get here."

A minute later he started aft, and Alan smiled up at Ole. "He's been restless because he missed a trip. Now he wants to get started."

Ole smiled back. "Su-ure. It's no good lying in coal dock."

Alan looked down the spaced hatches where the cones of coal showed heaped in the open hatchways. "Looks like you're pretty well filled up."

Ole nodded in quick contented jerks. "Yah, but coal ain't so heavy. We can take it right oop to the hatch cowers. Dere ain't much more to come. Four honderd an' feefty tons." There was a singsong in Ole's soft voice that gave everything he said a gentle music. Now, quite unexpectedly, he chanted: "I lak dis boat. I work in dis boat four

years already. Nice boat for working on deck. It gets cold in a coupla mont's, snow cut right in your face. But it's good boat all right." His smile was as bright as a child's.

"Cigarette?" Alan asked.

Ole bobbed his head and took one silently. He touched a match to the winch cylinder and the sulphur flowered. When they had the light he put his big broganed foot against the cylinder. "It's purty hot all right." And he shook his head gravely.

Amidships, a crew was dragging a line of hose, washing down, leaving the red deck clean and wet behind them.

"More coal coming," said Ole softly. "Wash boat off an' den it gets dirty again. So wash it off again. Yust keep de boys bissy." His face twinkled with that pleasantry.

"Guess I'll turn in," Alan said as he flipped his cigarette over the rail.

"Yah, dat's right," Ole nodded. "I'm on till four o'clock."

In the morning the *James K. Richardson* was still in the dock, and Alan went to breakfast over the long clean deck with a few hatches open to take the last of the load. "We've already lost more than we get for carrying nine cars of coal," Carl said. "But that's the way it goes. Some damn' fool up in the office. Now they've lost those cars. Can't find them anywhere."

The morning passed slowly, an empty wait while the warm August wind blew over, and out beyond the breakwater the blue of Lake Erie flashed in the sun. At noon, when the mess boy came along the deck ringing his high-toned bell, there was a shout from the loading platform; the missing cars were there. Then a switch engine puffed

around an arc of railroad track and the lost gondolas were cut loose.

An hour later the lines were aboard, the ship was vibrant with the engines' driving, bells jangled in the wheelhouse, and the long hull swung round the breakwater and into Lake Erie. Alan saw the tension leave his brother's face, and he wondered a little at the composure that replaced it. Only a fortunate man could find so much in his work. And there did seem a quiet solid reality about this business: the hatches battened down, the men at their stations, the engines pounding out a measured seventy revolutions, and ten thousand tons of coal bound for the blast furnaces of South Chicago.

That evening the light faded over calm water and in the growing dark a lighthouse flashed. Alan watched from the wheelhouse while the night grew complete. At the lighted desk his brother was bent over a Detroit River chart and the Finnish helmsman stood against the wheel, the binnacle light faint on his stolid face. Slowly they drew near the floodlamps of a barge and a long serpentine of lights curving away.

Alan turned to the wheelsman. "What's all that?"

"Sandsucker," Nels answered. "Sucks the sand over a mile away."

Carl spoke over his shoulder. "They're digging a new channel to Toledo. Take a look at that dredge. It's the most powerful suction machine in the world."

"Guess I'll go down and see it closer," Alan said.

"We pass Detroit at one o'clock," Carl called after him. "If you're awake it's worth seeing."

It was warm starlit midnight when Detroit swam past. Through the dark river the ship swept quietly and up in the sky hung the towers and terraces of the city. Alan watched it pass, and it was fantasy: the high and intermittent jewels flashing in the airways; the lofty façades, Euclidean constellations walled under Cassiopeia and the Pleiades. Thrown above the big river was the arched firm necklace of the suspension bridge, the high towers skeletoned dimly and the small lights of traffic moving without sound. *JOHNNY WALKER* blazed in golden letters on the Canadian shore, and above the American façades a vertical alternate flashing leapt between the radio towers: *WWJ—NEWS—WWJ—NEWS—WWJ—NEWS,* and down by the smoldering lights of moored ships at the river front grew a nervous green flashing: *VERNER'S GINGER ALE—Deliciously Different.*

All this was very quiet, with only the soft wash at the steamer's bow. Then the sudden rush of the mail boat and the snort of a motor launch swinging alongside with the *Free Press* and the *Blade.* It was quiet again when the launches dropped behind: only the snore of water under the big square bow and the little buoy lights flashing in the channel, and behind them the fantasy of towers fading among the stars.

Alan rubbed his eyes and looked again before the vision was gone. Overhead Aldebaran and the Hyades, and above the dark and sleeping river the strong stars that man has planted. This too was America; and for all its confusion, its periled hopes, for all the death of its dreaming, one could not fail to believe in it still.

2

In the morning there was wide water again; with smoke pouring over the counter they climbed the long blue hill of Huron. There was a stately still procession now, four diminishing slant-decked vessels spaced into the north. On the west the low shores of Michigan stood like a horizon line; eastward the forests of Canada, distant, dim, half-real, gave way at last to nothing. Ahead was only light and the long blue hill to journey, with the intervaled ships giving space a dimension, marking a road, a thoroughfare, a commerce: America's trade possessing the one wilderness that men could not alter, passing in purpose and symmetry between sea and sky.

Alan walked the deck in broad stillness and the morning light. There was a curious comfort in this unhurried vessel. He thought about the trades and activities of men, in cities and towns and in a countryside, and he came back to the quiet ship with the faint measured throb of engines, and there was a comfort here unlike any other. It was not a shallow or palpable comfort; it was an underlying purpose and order. (*But the sweetest way to me, is a ship's upon the sea.*) A man had his world, a small deck in a wide circle; his will operated there, and his duty was as clear as the horizon that bounded him at last. Alan saw the men at their posts: his brother on watch in the wheelhouse bending over the navigation table, and framed against the big glass windows the patient form of the wheelsman, puffing at his pipe; down on deck the sailors stretching tarpaulins, passing unhurried along the hatches, their movements sure;

aft by the galley a mess boy in a white apron peeling potatoes in a wooden pail, and a coal passer on the boat deck turning a ventilator to the wind. Along the hatches the voices were deliberate, the men were talkative in a spare way, contented and bantering: *Mak it go lak donnamyte. . . . What you mean, Sven, lak donnamyte? . . . You know, donnamyte. Ain't you never seen it go, donnamyte, brakin' oop the montains?* In the wheelhouse a routine exchange: *Ten degrees starboard. What's your reading now? . . . T'ree honderd an' twenty. . . . Check her there.* Then the quiet work on the big Lake Huron chart, the faint sound of dividers and parallel rulers and the soft noise of the wheelsman's hand on smooth spokes. Down in the engine room with a green-shaded light hanging over his table the chief dipping his pen in an ink bottle and writing in his fine clear up-and-down hand: *R.P.M. 79, Wind N.N.E. Speed 10.2 Abreast Pointe aux Barques Light 10:39.* All around him the throb and pulse of those engines, the enormous stroke of the driving arms, the humming of the shaft (profound and quiet like the earth's axis). He looked over his steel-rimmed glasses, his blunt head lifted to read the chalk marks an oiler was making on the soundings board. From beyond the bulkhead came the ring of shovels on iron, the clangor of furnace doors. But the ponderous rhythm of the driving arms was the true shape of achievement. It was the meaning.

From the space and quiet of the wheelhouse to the throbbing harmony of the engine room, men were at their places and the day's work went on. In bunkrooms, behind blue curtains that trembled always with that deep vibration,

the watch slept, white arms thrown over blue counterpanes, the shoulder muscles repeating faintly that remote and dominating rhythm. In due time they would take over: the course would be renewed, the fires would redden, without a shade of variance the enormous cycle of triple expansion would go on: the steam, making in the boilers, would pass through the separator and into the high-pressure valve chest, expanding in the cylinder to drive the piston with that intolerable power; then, still abysmal, led like a blind Samson through the low-pressure receiver to the low-pressure cylinder for a swift reciprocating stroke; so to the condenser and, as water now, pumped to the feed tank and at last delivered again, docile at the feed pumps' urging, to the boiler; and the cycle ready to repeat itself once more. With quiet voices in the wheelhouse other men would take their three-point bearing on Thunder Bay Island and a cross bearing on Presque Isle Light. They would tune in on Gray's Reef Radio Beacon, listening in the ear phones for that thin blue syllable, following it, alert and with patience, shifting course when Spectacle Reef Light lay abreast, and guided by that blue note out of space checking course again, with the Straits of Mackinac dead on.

As a result of this, another ship would creep through the Chicago River and the bridges would jacknife, pitching their inclines toward the sky, when the deep whistle cried among those canyons. Ten thousand tons of coal would grow beside the docks, the blast furnaces would redden in the prairie night. . . . A man's work could be that simple and that certain. Alan saw the crew at their ordered

tasks and he knew they had found something. Work, with no doubting it, without any haunting frustrations; a job, a man's job, satisfying. Think of forty lives clarified and made one by the drive of those pistons. Think of an engineer feeling the pulse of his engines, hearing every note in that harmony, conscious of it all; or of a captain, his bearings taken, his course checked, the ship riding so surely and so self-possessed behind him.

But some are born with a harder and more remote desire, who can be at peace with the world only when they aim at something beyond it.

3

The chief engineer was a solidly built man with small bright eyes in his Norwegian face. His square head was set on square shoulders; he had hardly any neck, so that his square chin was settled in the open collar of his shirt. He invited Alan into his cabin after supper, and when he had his pipe clamped in his blunt teeth he reached into a desk drawer.

"Now this place I was sayin' about, Fort Pierce—it's a good town all right. It's on the Indian River. A fine town for winter, you bet. See, here's its pictures. That's the ocean out here and here's the jetty. Here shows the country outside the town. Big orchards"—and he waved his blunt-fingered hand—"yah, many big orchards like that. They ship carloads and carloads of fruit and wegetables every year. I been down here three winters now, walk around like a tramp all the time." His eyes twinkled behind his steel-rimmed glasses.

Out on deck again they saw the slanting evening light fall on a low green shore line.

"Is that mainland?" Alan asked.

"No. Island. Boblow Island. Past here is Point Detour and Soo River. Then it's all wolderness." He swept his arm in a semicircle across the north. "All around here it's all wolderness—wolderness. In October-Nowember it's deep snow in them woods. Lonely and wolderness."

There was no sunset. A mass of gray cloud rose in the west and absorbed the sun where it was falling. A gray evening light came over the water. As Alan walked forward he saw a watchman tightening butterflies between the hatches. The tarpaulins were stretched snug and the butterfly clamps reinforced the strongbacks that were laid over them.

He found his brother's wheelsman lounging at the bulkhead. "You've got all the tarps on," Alan said, pointing to the hatches.

"Yah. Looks lak a blow tonight." Nels' voice was expressionless. "It's a good boat in a wind," he went on. "It don't buckle up like some. On the *B. F. Jones* now, you walk down her deck in a sea and she buckle so she throw you out of step. Not this one." He pushed his hat back on his sloping forehead, and with the strong lines there he looked like a man in thought. "I been on this ship two years now. Last winter I kep' ship. I kep' ship on this boat."

"Whereabouts?" Alan asked.

"On this boat, right here."

"But where did she lay up?"

"Oh, Conneaut."

"Must have been a quiet winter," Alan said. "You were the only person aboard?"

He nodded. "It's not much, but it's better than nothing." Then he turned to Alan confidentially. "I had my radio. Now what kind of radio machine you think is best?"

Alan didn't know.

"I play my radio, and the time goes fast. Forty-five dollars a month I sent home."

"Home?"

"Yah. I got a home but I don't see it for two years. My wife and two kids, in Marquette." He pushed his hat back farther on his head and his voice was edged with pride. "At home I got a Chevvy, 1931 Chevvy coach. I drove it 700 miles Toledo from Marquette and only use a pint of oil. It runs as good as new. I tell my wife to have the grease looked at. Now how often you look at grease in your rear end? Twice a year maybe, but they always say it's full. That Chevvy never needs no grease."

His face had grown very earnest and he looked into Alan's eyes. "Now what kind of gas you think is best? At home I burned Red Crone. It's same as here Soheeo. Now did you ever burn Mobilgas? That's for me the best. It starts right lak a shot, an' good mileage, too. It's best gas I ever burned. It's good."

He talked on, with the earnest line in his brow and his eyes thoughtful. His forehead receded sharply, but the lower half of his face had strength and composure, a fine long jaw and a nose like an old-fashioned actor's. There was no humor in his face or in his voice, but a love of serious

talking. As his words went on, Alan pictured the methodical slow-witted watchman keeping ship in a frozen river, sitting by his iron stove with the decks all drifted white, and thinking earnestly about motor oil and radios and his family up in a snowy town in the woods, and his wife, trying to remember how she looked and wondering how the children were growing, and thinking about the grease in the transmission of his 1931 Chevvy coach.

"I been on plenty of these boats," he said. "I kep' a list of their names, all the ones I worked on. Fourteen years I been on the boats. Three years in a camp and then I went to the war and now fourteen years on boats. It's hard work in that Michigan lumber camp. Not so good like on these boats."

Then Ole came by. He looked across the dim water to the nervous flashing on Gray's Reef. Above the light a silent web of lightning scattered in the heavy sky. He smiled his gentle blue-eyed smile. "Storm's comin'."

4

In a white instant of lightning Alan saw his brother standing at the rail. Then it was dark and close, no stir of wind and as yet no thunder. The strong St. Ignace flashing swept the black at six-second intervals showing a flat sea. The air was warm and still.

"They say it's going to blow," Alan said.

Carl looked around as another web of lightning spread through the sky. "Looks that way. Wish you'd gone on the train?"

"No. Not yet anyway."

Carl's eyes searched the north. "It won't last long. One of those Canada storms. It's up there over Manitoba now, and coming pretty fast. They don't last long this time of year. Be over by morning, probably."

"Marvelous lightning." Alan was gazing into the vast northern sky, the sky that hovered over Lake Superior and the woods of Ontario and the far naked plains of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. There was the vast impenetrable dark, and then a sudden burning river spread its nervous tributaries: the whole river trembled and was gone. Then the dark was nearer than before.

Carl pointed at spaced lights in the seaway. "That fellow's changing course. A towboat with two barges. He'll head in by the point for shelter." As he spoke the lights changed pattern, the towboat swung in toward the flashing of St. Ignace. "He can't take a chance of letting those barges get away from him."

Now a high tenor question came through the dark and was answered in a prolonged bass and a jet of steam against the *Richardson's* stack.

"We'll pass ahead of her," Carl said.

In a white flash the towboat showed clear, her stack pouring thick smoke, with the towlines sagging and the deep-laden barges spaced out behind. Then darkness and the single lights of the barges, the far light winking lonely at the harbor mouth, and moving in blackness beneath it a small bright ruby with a white drop of light above.

"What's the red light?" Alan asked.

"Running light. Red to port and green to starboard."

Again the sky was riven with great forks of fire, shimmering and darting in the north, snarls of that instant burning cable, vast mile-long knots of it and the clean end flicking away, distant, distant, over those plains of Manitoba. Close by passed the laboring tugboat: *chuff-chuff, chuff-chuff, chuff-chuff, chuff-chuff,* absurdly like the ticking of the walnut clock back in the Homestead in the stillness; *chuff-chuff, chuff-chuff, chuff-chuff, chuff-chuff,* and then a taste of that sharp smoke and the warm sweet sickish smell of steam from the tugboat's boilers. At once the wind came warm and menacing, a ripple ran over the black water in darkness, and a far faint drum of thunder boomed and faded.

"Guess I'll turn in," Carl said. "You coming along?"

"No. I'll watch it a bit longer."

"You're lucky you don't have to turn out at midnight."

They were through the Narrows, with St. Ignace flashing low and far behind, when the first big drops rained on the deck. The wind grew stronger. Now the ship rose and rolled as seas drove in from her quarter. Another fissure of fire ran through the sky, and this time the thunder cannonaded, a crashing volley that swelled and diminished with a thousand separate solid rumblings, an avalanche down the sky's enormous valley.

The wind was quickly chill and the pelting drops were cold coins on his face. Alan snapped his cigarette over the rail and hurried to his cabin.

5

At midnight Carl went on watch. The rain had stopped but a forty-mile gale was ridging Lake Michigan with steep furrows. The laden ship rolled sluggishly, pitching when seas broke on her bow. At four o'clock the weather was the same, and he went below to sleep till breakfast. He crossed the rising wet deck and gained the comparative shelter of the bulkhead. The wind poured against the gangway door and he leaned hard to get it closed. Then he saw the bar of light beneath his brother's door. He knocked and opened it. Alan was leaning over the washstand, his shoulders heaving.

Carl grinned broadly. "Yo, ho, blow the man down!" he shouted above the crash of a sea on deck. "Now isn't this better than a damned librarian's job?"

But the grin froze when he saw his brother's face. Alan's eyes were straining in the white drawn sockets, with the cheek bones sharp and the hollows sunk beneath them. His forehead was dewed with sweat, and as he stood there he raised a nervous hand to brush the damp hair back. Yet it wasn't the whiteness and it wasn't the seasick sweat that kept Carl staring.

"You're sick!" he cried. "You're spitting blood. Why didn't you call me?"

Alan managed a weak grin, and then another spasm bent him double. His mouth yawned, a shudder shook his frame, and when it passed a crimson thread ran from his mouth.

Carl found a towel. He mopped the stained face and

dried the damp forehead. But the dew sprang up again and the red brightened at his brother's lips.

"Get back into that bunk," he said.

When Alan was in bed with hot towels about his throat, Carl said brusquely: "You should never have got up. Why didn't you call somebody? Did you try?"

Alan shook his head. "Just seasick at first. And then I began to spit red. That made me sicker."

"Of course. It would never end. You'd spit your life out that way. How long were you up?"

"Couple of hours. I went back to bed but I couldn't stay. I thought if I'd only get my stomach empty it would be better." As he spoke a new wave of nausea struck him. He sat up sharply.

But Carl pushed him back and thrust a towel to his mouth. "You've got to stay down," he insisted. "Now don't move till I get back."

The door banged behind him and when he came again he had an armload of towels and a small black medicine case. "I don't know a lot about this," he said, examining some bottles in the light, "but we'll try something. Here!" He took two white tablets and filled a tumbler at the washstand. "See if you can get these down, and a little water."

Alan swallowed and lay back on the pillows, his dark hair rumpled and his forehead freshly misted. Carl mopped his face. "That stuff ought to help you keep quiet."

Alan closed his eyes. The ship plunged and rose, rolling sharply at the crest. His body moved in the berth. On the next pitch there was a shuddering impact and a roar of water. He opened his eyes.

"We caught that one," his brother said. "Wind's changing a little and they're coming head on. It'll blow itself out by morning. We had a weather report from Superior a while ago. It's already over up there."

Alan closed his eyes again. He wanted to tell his brother to go now, but he didn't say it. There was comfort to have him there, comfort in the strong brusque hands rubbing the towel across his forehead, in Carl's low voice, in his face bent over. It was good to have him there after that dizziness and weakness, and now the faint far feeling as he lay not wanting to be left, not yet.

Carl sat quietly waiting for his brother's breath to deepen. He studied the white face, the straight mouth, the wide-set eyes, the slight and brittle chin—a Bradley face yet so unlike his own, not strong and self-sufficient like his own. Alan was six years younger, and with that difference between them Carl had never known him much. He seemed a stranger, often, not because he was quiet but because his was a thoughtful quiet and because Alan had always been self-sufficient in another way, not easy to explain. Books, he had gone in for, study, school, and now a job in a library, of all places. Carl didn't understand it, but when his cousins at Jonas Bradley's said, "Alan's going to work in a library; that's funny—seems like a woman's job," he had answered quickly: "There's none of you got brains enough to do it. Nor me either. He's smarter than the rest of us. That's why we don't understand it." Carl had never shared his brother's interests or his confidence; vaguely he knew that Alan had won honors in college and a handsome diploma that was not a diploma but a literary prize, and that

he had put it away in his bureau without speaking of it again after it arrived. But now as he sat looking at the white face on the pillow, the patient mouth, the fine white forehead faintly lined with pain, he felt a sudden closeness to him; and when he saw Alan's hands clenched in sleep, his own fingers bit sharply into his palms.

6

When Alan woke it was broad daylight; sun was pouring through his porthole and the gold disk of light was a pendulum on the bulkhead. The ship was riding free except for that steady swinging. He raised himself and saw the blue swell of Lake Michigan under a blue morning sky. Then his elbow crumpled and he sank back on the pillow.

As he lay there he heard the breakfast bell ringing in the wind, and he pictured the messboy crossing the deck, his white apron blowing like a kite, the brass bell raised in his hand. Then Carl looked in, his face whipped with color, his voice filling the small room with the porthole closed.

"How's the boy?" he asked cheerfully. "It's a fine morning. Blue sky and clear all around. You feel better?"

"Guess so," Alan said, and he tried to sit up. But his shoulder collapsed again.

Carl bent over him, and he saw the blue moons beneath his brother's eyes and the dampness still on his white forehead. "Take it easy." And his voice was softer. "You haven't got your strength back yet. You lost a lot last night."

"Feel so foolish though," Alan said, and his eyes closed for a moment.

"Any pain in here?" Carl tapped his throat.

"No, just weak. That's all."

"Well, it's no wonder. You probably haven't got a thing inside you. Feel like breakfast?"

"Maybe."

"Well, you sit tight. I'll send the messboy with a tray. Some warm breakfast will make a difference in you." He looked up at the clamped portlight. "And some air, too. It's like an engine room in here." He turned down the butterflies and lifted the port glass, hooking it in the brass chains hanging there. The small blue curtain billowed. "That'll help." He stood in the door a minute. "Anything special you'd like for breakfast?"

Alan shook his head.

"Well, I'll send it along. And I'll stop by in half an hour."

Soon the messboy was there with a big black kitchen tray spread with two square napkins and loaded down with breakfast. There was a tumbler full of orange juice, a bowl of cereal, a stack of toast with a napkin tented over it, a pot of coffee, a dish of marmalade, and a plate of doughnuts.

The boy drew up a chair and set the tray at Alan's side. "How d'you want your eggs?" he demanded.

Alan looked up and smiled wanly. "No eggs, thank you."

"Pancakes?" the boy suggested.

"No."

"Bacon, ham, sausage? Fried potatoes?"

Alan shook his head. "Nothing more, thanks."

When the boy was gone he propped himself up with

pillows and swallowed the orange juice a little at a time. Then he leaned forward to pour the coffee from the silvered pot. But a nausea pushed him back against the pillows and a warm sick fullness rose in his throat.

When Carl looked in he found him coughing into a stained towel.

7

During the day Carl came frequently. He looked, frowning, through the medicine chest and thumbed the pages of a manual, and he brought Captain Massett down to look at Alan lying there. The captain was a wiry little man with the hair cropped close over his round head and stubby brown hands that lay quietly on his knees as he sat beside the berth. He peered at Alan's throat with his birdlike eyes and he put on his gold-rimmed glasses to look at the pages of the manual.

"Hurt you inside, son?" he asked at last.

"No. Not now."

"But you feel kind of sick there."

Alan nodded.

The little man looked at Carl. "We had a passenger once got seasick, and it left him weak as a worm. He stayed in bed all the way to Duluth. I say clear to Duluth."

But Carl shook his head. "That's all right, but it's this hemorrhage I'm thinking about."

"Well," the captain said, "I ain't much of a doctor. I say I'm no doctor, but it looks to me like he needs to keep quiet."

"Just weak, that's all," Alan said. "Seems foolish."

"We'll make it to Chicago tomorrow, and maybe you'll be feeling better by then."

Alan nodded.

A series of sharp blasts sounded outside. There was a hurry of feet on the deck above. Carl put down a medicine bottle. "I'll take care of it, captain." The little man nodded, and he was gone down the gangway.

"What is it?" Alan asked, his eyes lifted.

"Fire drill. Got to have one every week. It's a gover'ment regulation. I say gover'ment regulation."

Alan lay back, his eyes closing.

"Yes," the little man went on, "a ship's a hard place to be sick in. I say a terrible place to be sick in. But we'll make Chicago tomorrow and then you'll feel better. And if you get some grub down, that would make a difference. Feel like you could eat a little?"

"Not hungry," Alan said. "But I'll try at supper time."

"Sure. I'll have the steward fix up some boiled eggs for you. I say some toast and boiled eggs and a piece of that custard pie. This time tomorrow we'll be in Chicago. You'll feel better then."

8

But when they were tied up in the South Chicago docks, Alan was still without strength. He managed to shave himself, wondering at the white hollows in his face, and to get into his clothes. Then he sat down on his berth, and it seemed too great an effort even to go on deck. At last Carl

called a doctor. He came aboard with his black satchel and put the black tubes in his ears and thumped Alan's chest with his middle finger. It was only a few minutes before the pronouncement was made:

"No, you can't start work tomorrow, or next week or next month either. You've got to go somewhere and take a good long rest. If you get proper food and sleep, you might be as good as ever in a year. If you don't, well, when you start coughing up blood again you can know it's your lungs you're spitting, and it might be too late next time."

So Carl sent a telegram to Ocean County and put his brother on the train. And Alan looked out at the miles of idle box cars and the smoky walls of Chicago and the long streets wheeling fan-wise past, and he was too tired to think of anything but the grateful quiet around the Homestead and the old apple tree leaning above the shore.

V

Johnny Appleseed

I

All the time the doctor was talking, Irma Bradley nodded her head quietly. "I understand," she said. "I've been through it once. His father had it, but we didn't start in time."

"What I tried to tell him," the doctor went on, "is that it all depends on him. He must get complete rest, all the time. I don't mean that he has to stay in bed; it will be better for him to move around, be outside, occupy himself. But he mustn't overdo it. He'll think he's all right, and that's what you have to look out for. *Spes phthisica,* they call it."

She looked puzzled.

"It means the hope of the consumptive. The buoyancy they feel. It's hard to make them realize they're invalids."

Afterward she explained it to Alan. "A year, the doctor says—if you get proper rest and care. Ten hours of sleep every night, and regular meals with a glass of milk between times. You've got to gain twenty pounds, that's the first thing. Then you'll have more strength." The afternoon sunlight fell across the room and showed the lines in her face as she smiled wanly. "I thought you oughtn't to be going off so soon. I could tell you needed rest. You must

have been sick last winter. The doctor says you must have had some warning."

"Maybe. I coughed a good deal, and sometimes I was tired. I didn't think much about it."

"Like your father," she said. "He wouldn't ever think of himself. And I guess your grandmother Sletter was the same way—raising a family and doing a man's work in the barns and garden, and all the time her lungs were going. Well, we'll start your treatment now." She disappeared into the kitchen and came back with a glass of milk and a plate of Graham crackers. "The doctor says you should gain twenty pounds by Christmas, and keep your weight up there. It helps to get your strength back."

Alan sipped the milk and looked out across the terrace. Here he had a grateful sense of protection. Like a child, he felt the security that his mother gave to the place, and the milk and crackers had an added efficacy because she brought them. Outside was the sun and shadow of those familiar grounds and the quiet blue of Lake Erie flowing to the sky. He felt curiously at rest, and he wondered that he did not have pain or resentment. Now he seemed freed from any urgency. The world seemed distant and half real, as in his boyhood, out there beyond the still far line where sky came down at last. His work in the world would wait till he was ready; no task required his instant effort. He would grow slowly into strength again, with the familiar fields about him and water washing on the quiet shore.

With this resignation and acceptance he pictured the months ahead—in the orchard the busy autumn weeks of

apple picking, the men at work in the cornfields shocking the ragged stalks in tented rows where the November wind would rustle with the strange cold music only withered corn leaves know, Jonas directing the plowing of autumn fields and the sowing of winter wheat, Tatum Young sitting on his doorstep keeping a patient watch on the highway, Ursula wandering through Indian summer, over the earth October's golden light and the rich October air. In winter ice forming on the shallow water; and over the empty lake the furious white driving, the stern harp of the hemlocks roaring and every corn shock mounded with snow; all night long the loud wind blowing, the surf piled high and frozen into bearded ridges like a rough-plowed field.

By winter, he reflected, he would be stronger than now. In those short afternoons under a close gray sky, with snow a white still raining in the air, he would tramp a shore whiter than sand with his steps written as though in time forever. A blank and silent world waiting for the mind and heart of man to know it—he would plunge back into the forest, up hill and down ravine, coming out at times with surprise above the icy acres of the lake, the frozen hedges at his feet and beyond that white chaos the live gray water, limitless. The wind would be a knife-blade over the northern waters and the shore ice ridged and plated. He would walk on with winter's exultation, warmth deep hid from cold, until the yellow lamplight brightened in a window across the fading fields and dusk was blue-gray all along the shore. Then food and firelight and the half-sad return from a primitive age. Out there were wind and frost, the slow deep life of trees, the dark processes

making the mold and renewing its richness; the blind, quiet, everlasting groping and taking hold of life, secret, in darkness, within the earth. There, passing over, was the unresting wind, the lake frozen in stilled breakers on the shore; there was the wild and urgent life that had nothing to do with men, with the hopes and desires of creatures that sent their chimney smoke up into the cold air and shut themselves in caves of their own making till the earth and the sea and the sky should be clement once more.

So Alan's thoughts wandered, over a glass of milk. In weakness and need of rest, his body gave a curious freedom to his mind and a curious clairvoyance. At Chicago the doctor had spoken of a sanatorium and a change of climate. Idaho Springs, he had said, a Colorado colony. Alan thought of it now, and in this mood of clairvoyance he saw it as though it were a familiar place—the groups of patients, red-cheeked with the false color of their trouble, young most of them, young and their eyes haunted with hope and marked with shadows; rebelling at facts, a man against Fate, a proud and lonely struggle: only the young make pathos and glamour out of disease. Young and unwilling to die, and fighting the battle silently. The mountain road up a naked yellow canyon had seen them at midnight, alone, crying out with their scant lungs against the doom that held them there; and those bright stars, the Lion and the Lyre, above the gulch had seen their lips twisted and their bitter faces. Young and doomed and unready to die, these men had watched the towers marching up Manhattan Island and the blue dawn creeping over pine-dark islands in the fissured coast of Maine, they had known the flaming

colors of Vermont forests in October, the corn shocks tented across Ohio's fields, the wind moving like water over the leagues of Kansas wheat in June, and the white little towns of the Dakotas, the lonely little towns with one tall chimney smoking and the water tower like a silver bubble in the air. They had felt the smoky grandeur that is Chicago rising above the blue steel of Michigan's waters, and they had ached with the departing cry of ships from Boston harbor. They had known America, the brooding, ample land, the land like a boy, awkward, strong, unsure of itself, but deep within so full of dream, so great a dreaming. Young and unreconciled to death, they lay sleepless with desire—work, effort, struggle, the pride of doing—simple things, or if not simple, common things; but life denied it to them. And because their life was doomed each saw himself as ill starred and extraordinary, and each felt in himself, faint and far but deeply urgent, like a river underground, the pulse beat of his genius.

All these thoughts over a glass of milk. Alan shook his head, wondering at the weakness that left his mind so free. But a sanatorium—he thought more soberly—that was not the healing he required. His eyes went across the terrace where the afternoon shadows were lengthening and the first September leaves lay yellow on the ground. No naked canyons here, no blue mountains aloof and everlasting; but the earth he knew, the never resting water. No stranger land could give him strength.

2

An hour later when he had gone outside and was sitting on the shore with a rug over his shoulders, watching the slanting light and the long hemlock shadows on the grass, Donna came to him.

She was breathless. "Alan!" She dropped down at his side, and both her hands tightened on his arm. "I'm so sorry."

He saw the anxious concern in her face. "You know, then?"

"Yes. The doctor was in to see Grandpa."

"I didn't want to tell you." Alan's face was filling with life, his eyes burning above the wasted cheeks. "I didn't suppose you'd still be here, and then when we came I saw your car in the garage. I wanted to race right up to see you, and yet I didn't want to tell you."

"Why not, Alan?"

His eyes swung out across the lake. "Seemed like a confession. Failure or something."

Her hands tightened on his arm. "That's nonsense, Alan."

He looked back at her. "Why haven't you gone? You've never stayed into September before."

"Father wants to stay till the gas lease is settled. But we'll have to be going soon. Dad says he doesn't dare stay away from the office after this week."

"Well, that's three days," Alan said, folding her hand in his. "Donna—do you remember the night—on the beach?"

"Yes, Alan."

"It was only a week ago, but it seems so much longer. Is it true, the way I remember it?"

She looked quietly into his eyes. "Yes, it's true."

"In spite of everything?" His face clouded. "In spite of gas leases and sickness and—"

"In spite of everything, Alan. If you could know how I felt when the doctor said you were home, and how I've wondered and worried. I wanted to be with you, and then I saw you out here. Tell me what the doctor said. I thought you'd be in bed."

"I was, till the doctor came. He let me up."

"What did he say?"

"He said a year of rest and quiet ought to be enough. It makes me awfully useless. But a year will pass."

She shook her head anxiously. "I'm sorry. Tell me about your trip. The doctor said you had a hard time. I'm terribly sorry. Were you awfully sick?"

A sudden coughing shook Alan's chest, and his body jerked before the shallow futile hacking. It subsided slowly, and he wiped the water from his eyes. When he looked at her he saw the tears falling on her own face. "Oh, Alan, I'm so sorry."

He stared at her silently, and all at once he felt a resentment rising in his throat. She was sorry. The commiseration in her face, the pity in her voice. He had not thought of this. A burning spread inside him, and he had only half an understanding of what she said. While she talked his mind kept telling him over and over how he must seem to a person vigorous, strong, overflowing with life; how tired he must appear, how unalive, how far removed from ardor

and activity. Quickly and in a new way he became conscious of his weakness, the bitter weakness that left him empty and fatigued, the scant breath that protested against effort, lightness that was like a faint air in his head. And in Donna's sunburned face that hurt look, that pity, and her voice repeating, *Sorry . . . sorry . . . sorry . . .*

Later he could not remember what she had said except that one word. At evening, as he sat inside, not reading but silent with a book in his hands, his mother, quiet across the room, understood that he did not want to talk. But she did not know what brought the bitterness and resentment in his face.

3

Tatum Young sat hunched over his iron cookstove, eating out of his frying pan. He forked out crisp curls of mutton fried in its own fat with shreds of cabbage and golden-brown onions. When he had finished he sucked the grease out of his mustache and set the frying pan on the floor.

"All right, Sam."

Then he caught himself and put the skillet back on the stove. By habit he stepped over Sam's place on the floor and went outside. Soon he had his pipe out and was cutting up plug tobacco, slicing it with his clasp-knife and then crumbling it with his lean fingers. He tamped it into the blackened bowl carefully and put the stem between his blunted yellow teeth. When the pipe was lighted he could taste the mutton grease his hands had left in the tobacco; it made a rich smoke, satisfying. He let the fragrance drift

up slowly from his lungs and through his nostrils while his shrewd eyes were on the highway where the race of cars flowed past.

Across the barn lot a figure approached through sunlight and into the strong shadow of the barn. A voice came to the old man on the doorstep. "Hello, Tatum." And now, in the sunlight again, Tatum saw Alan.

Slowly the old man moved over on the stoop, feeling with a hand to push the dog out of the way. For a moment his thin face was puzzled as his hand pushed against emptiness. "Sam—" he began, and then swallowed the word.

His blue eyes looked up brightly. "Set down, Alan." He puffed twice, holding the pipe cupped in both hands. "What you doin' back here?" he asked in an idle curiosity. "I thought you went away on a job or something."

"I did. But I'm back again."

Tatum nodded. "That's the way it was with me. Always turnin' back this way. Seemed like the roads all run to Ocean County." He sucked noisily at his pipe and blew out a cloud of acrid smoke. "But you're back pretty sudden, aren't you?"

"Yes. I got sick. They sent me back."

The little man peered with his blue eyes. "You do look porely," he admitted. "But you never was hefty like your brother."

Out of habit his gaze swung back to the highway and now his bony hand shot out. "Look there—Montana." He pulled the grimy tablet from his pocket.

"That's a good one—Montana." He finished printing out

the number and closed the pages. "They don't come past here often."

Alan drew a cigarette from his pocket and felt for a match. The old man held out the blackened bowl of his pipe. "Take a light out of there."

They leaned back, each against a post at the side of the stoop, and smoked silently. On the highway the cars raced by, chromium glinting in the sun, the bright body colors flashing. The tires made a rubber humming on the hot stone pavement.

Soon Tatum grunted into his pipe stem and penciled out a number.

"What was it?" Alan asked idly.

"Wisconsin."

Alan narrowed his eyes as his cigarette grew shorter. "You never wonder who they are, where they're going?"

"Nope," Tatum said, sending a puff of smoke up from his pipe bowl.

"Be kind of interesting to know, wouldn't it? Where they've been and what they're thinking, and what's ahead of them."

"Sandusky," Tatum said. "Toledo." He puffed a couple of bubbles of smoke. "Chicago, maybe."

"Yes, but what else? Every one of them living his life, trying to be something; a few of them stubborn and strong, most of them giving up after awhile."

The old man shook his head. "I never thought of that."

"There must be all kinds of people going past." Alan drew a last time on his cigarette and snapped the stub away. It fell in the shade of Tatum's summer wash bench

and sent a gray feather up into sunlight. "More kinds than anybody could imagine."

Tatum nodded at that. "People are funny. I worked for a man in Scioto County, down below Piketon six miles. He sold seventy thousand pounds of veal and pork every winter. Lambs, too, if I remember. But he wouldn't touch a taste of meat. Religion or something. They never had a smell of meat in that kitchen, ate veg'tables all the time. I come near to starvin' before I left. I'd eat them greens and eggs, and it seemed like I was hungry all the time. When we come to drivin' a load of pigs to the slaughterhouse I couldn't stand it any longer. I quit right there and I went up to a lunch room and I ate four plates of sausages so's to get my strength back." He shook his head grimly. "He was a big fellow, too, that farmer. But I fell off bad tryin' to eat them turnip stews." He sucked for a moment at his pipe, and then he remembered his point. "Take a horse now, you know what to expect. But you can't tell about people."

Tatum had few joys like reminiscing, and Alan was his best listener. Years ago, Alan had sat beside him on a wagon seat, idle in the barnyard, the little man frowning and staring down at the wagon tongue that rested in the mud, the boy with his eyes distant seeing the places in a wanderer's talk. Then, to a wondering boy, there was excitement in those tales. Now, with his illness and fatigue, it was comforting to hear the random memories of the thin stooped man with still the rich reek of horses about him.

Tatum had found a fruitful strain. He leaned against the post and pushed his shapeless hat, matted with cow's hair,

back on his head. "I remember another man I worked for. In Rock County, it was, a sheep farm down there. He wouldn't speak to his wife. Not a word, you understand, not a sound. He'd talk like hell everywhere else, even to the cows when he was milking. But not to his wife. She'd talk to him all right; she'd talk a blue streak, likely, and he'd only jest make signs. It like to drove me crazy. I got to makin' signs to her myself. She'd say, 'Didn't you have no shirt in the wash, Tatum?' and I'd make all kinds of signs tryin' to show my shirt was tore and I ripped it up to make a pad for a horse collar out of." He shook his shaggy head ruefully. "That was enough for me. I quit the place."

While he talked, Alan remembered those early years when the little man had a blond glint of beard under his blue eyes and looked so rabbity and seemed not to belong to the farm like other hired hands but to the white Ohio roads leading to the blue hills and the down-curving sky; like a ghost of Johnny Appleseed (*he ran with the rabbit and he slept with the streams*) treading the vanished wilderness, still seeking the horizon. The old man's words were about toil and employers, but as he listened Alan heard what those words could never tell, what was in the mind and the blood of a people and can be known only by intuition. Tatum Young was a simple person and closer to life than most. So while he talked, Alan saw the little man walking down Ohio's roads, the curving roads among the quiet hills, beside the winding streams of Ohio's counties. The spring wind was moving over fields of winter wheat and it came to the man with a friendliness; he knew the airs that blew

above white roads in April. His blue eyes lighted in his face while he watched horses marching over a field's rim and saw the swaying skeleton of a gang plow behind them, with a bent figure in the iron shell of the seat. There was luxury in standing at a crossroad, not knowing which way to take, a man on the roads with no destination, prolonging the luxury of choosing, loving the blind chance he followed. He sought the new and the uncertain. He was American.

For only in America was life so free and so fantastic. Two roads offering a free man the unguessed future: what life, and what labors, what villages, what sudden turnings, what growing fields, what horses—what horses to rub down after a long June day in the corn rows, to hear champing their hay in the night.

So Alan pictured the blue-eyed man, and now he was stopping on a wooden bridge above an April stream. He leaned on the sagging rail, for that is a part of spring, while a meadow lark sang from a fence rail, its throat open to the sun. The old earth and the youth in a meadow lark's singing; spring was born again. Below him, printed in the blue limestone by the creek, were the little fans of shellfish for his eyes to puzzle over. He did not know what patient wheels of time had turned in this Ohio land, what oceans had retreated before the ice crept down, what distant life had left its record through countless springs in that unmeasured gulf of time. He only saw a shellfish printed in blue stone at a creek's edge and showing now as firm as a fern's leaf where the new April grasses nodded in the air.

The white road made a turning and a stranger with a light step and gentle face went up to a low stone farmhouse at the end of a lane, and the reason he chose to stop there was a horse with a white star in his forehead, feeding in a pasture that ran down to the creek's light. Little things guide a man whose heart is simple.

A dozen roads and twenty turnings lay behind him, and what waited in the low stone farmhouse and the fields where the white-starred horse belonged? A summer's toil, hot days and windless nights, the deep slumbrous heat over rows of ribboned corn, the smarting dust of mowed timothy under the roomy eaves, the sharp yellow smell of threshing when a straw stack grew like an enormous beehive in the barn's strong shadow and the granary filled up with rivers of new grain.

After that season was done, another spell of wandering, another luxury of indecision at a crossroads in the brown October light. Idling again at a stream bed, leaning on a bridge rail above a dried-up creek (*Sugar Creek, Walnut Creek, Cane Creek, Thompson's Creek, Sand Creek, Paint Creek, Cow Creek, Dalton's Creek, Four Mile Creek, Indian Creek, Salt Creek—the rich Ohio word*). The tang of wood smoke in the air, the faint strong fiber of frost; on the hills the deep burnt bronze of beeches with dry leaves clinging in the broken crowns. No haste, no particular wondering, no thought for the gray skies of winter and cattle tracks in snow. His only motives were change and freedom; and seeing this figure on the roads one might question business and prudence, the sober virtues.

All at once Alan became conscious of the old man's words.

"They sold the place to a gas company. So I come back here."

"To a gas company?"

"Yep. Down by Findlay, it was. There was gas on a lot of them farms. They wanted to give me a job buildin' derricks, but I ain't a carpenter. It was off season, if I remember, and they said I wouldn't find no farmer lookin' for a hand after harvest. But I come along here. Your grandpa always had a place for me, and I always felt like comin' back here after a spell." He caught the number of a car racing past and muttered "Ioway," jotting it down. When the tablet was back in his pocket he spat vigorously into the withered September grass.

"There may be other farms as good," he went on, narrowing his blue eyes. "Take down in Mercer County, them big dairy farms—but this place always seemed right to me. The last time I come here I was sick, and I got better right off. I picked Sam up on the way that time. He was like me, lookin' for a new place and ready to lay down when he got there." While he talked, the old man reached for the dog and a puzzled look crossed his face when his hand felt nothing. Then he spat again and peered sideways at Alan. "I reckon it'll be the same with you. A little spell around here and you'll be stout as a plow horse."

Alan smiled. "I hope so, Tatum."

4

The September nights were growing cool, and the signs of a new season, mature and prodigal, were in the wind-

streaked sky. From the whispering elm boughs the first leaves were falling, curled and yellow, on the withered grass of early autumn. Over the lake the horizon grew hard and clear after heat hazes of August; far out the shapes of ore boats were sharp on the blue. The sun still burned hot at midday; but the evenings came early, and the lights on Cedar Point twinkled like Pleiades in the purple dusk.

To Roger Bradley, confined to a few steps from his wheel chair, looking from his bedroom windows at morning, or gazing across the terrace from the veranda, it was the best season. After the long spring rains and the hot sun of summer, the earth was making its yield. As he sat there, an old man tired and trammeled with his years, his mind was busy with the season's fullness. Already the barns were heaped to the roof with hay; the last cutting of alfalfa had been bedded into the deep mows, the dim stable aisles were fragrant with new grasses. In the cattle yard three great mounds of straw stood yellow as sunlight, and the trampled earth was dusted with the golden chaff of threshing. The granaries were filled to the topmost boards with white oats and running barley and the myriad small nuggets of new wheat. Under the September sun the long rows of corn were proudly tasseled, the pollen spikes like lines of seedling spruce trees marching down the field, lifted into sunlight; and when the wind stirred through the ribboned leaves the yellow fecund dust sifted down to the firm sheaths on the stalk where the silky tufts were browning as they drooped from the heavy ears. Hidden and secret, in the cunning darkness of the husk, the milky kernels ripened—life growing out of life; and the old man wondered, following the

cycle that never grew less strange for all its steadfast order: the buried seed, the growing blade, the silent miracle of pollination, and the ear with its multitude of milky grains waiting in darkness for time's maturing. In the orchard now the heavy fruit weighed down the branches. Red Astrachans and Yellow Bellflowers stippled the boughs with ripened color, and soon even the Winesaps and the Northern Spies would redden and the stems grow brittle to let them fall in their time. So in his wheel chair, with the framework of his life around him, the old man sat silent, his mind full of the grateful season.

Once he walked stiffly across the grass and the nurse trundled his empty wheel chair to the terrace edge, and there Alan joined him.

"Back home, eh, son? The doctor told me you're going to stay with us for awhile."

It seemed to please the old man; no misfortune could be much lamented when it brought a Bradley home.

"We'll fix you up here," he said, his gray eyes on the boy's wasted face. "I remember when Sterling came back once. He hadn't slept right for months, and he looked like an old man, though he wasn't thirty. Well, it didn't take a week to see the difference, and at the end of the summer you wouldn't have known him."

But when Alan coughed the sound tugged at darker strands in the old man's memory. He saw his son Peder, serious and silent, and growing thin beneath his strong burnt color of wind and sun; and beyond him he saw Elsa Sletter, grave-eyed and earnest, coughing her life out slowly and in secret, until it was too late. Life belonged to this land, and

death had come there, too. He had many memories, and sometimes it seemed that one man's life went back to the beginning of things and included all. So much he had known of struggle and hope, so many repeated comings of resolution, desire, and acceptance; yet not repeated either, for joy was never twice the same and sorrow was always separate.

Sitting there, Alan felt quiet come over the old man, and though he could not follow those distant patterns of memory he could sense the qualities of that retrospection. Years before, they had been together here, one with his eyes turned back on the past and the other looking ahead, as a child must do. Curiously their gaze had been exchanged so that out of his grandfather's memory Alan had begun to picture the many years of life upon that shore, and in the boy's ardent face Roger Bradley had seen the years to come. Now they had no need to talk but sat there together, an old man and a young one, both invalid, and for this hour both content to feel sunlight and the September air—summer still but not with summer's somnolence—the earth living, the water leaning remotely on the wind-streaked sky. And around them was the fullness of the year.

5

But to the three men who sat restless and separate on the terrace, or who talked together with earnest faces, there was no satisfaction in the season. Their thoughts dwelt avidly on the orchard, and in place of long rows of apple trees clouded with blossom in May and warm with the color of

their harvest in October, they saw the naked skeletons of drilling towers, the yellow earthworks of a pipe line, the squat round mushroom growth of storage tanks. But only in fancy, that was the trouble. They were nervous and impatient, and while their business waited in separate cities they were compelled to play the hollow game of waiting on a stiff-necked farmer's whim.

"I'll have to think it over," Jonas had said, and he seemed to make slow progress with the thinking. They waited a restless interval of a few days which seemed time enough to think over every idea that could have entered Jonas's stubborn head. Then they went again to see him, and they found him undecided still.

"I said I'd have to think it over," he repeated.

"What is there to think about?" Sterling asked truculently. Jonas gave him a long look, peering from beneath the broad brim of his straw hat as though he had never seen his half-brother before. "There's plenty," he said. "This farm has been here seventy years. You don't turn it over to a gas company without some thinking first."

"We aren't going to turn the farm over to anybody," Kirkwall said. "This lease doesn't affect any part of the place but the orchard."

"And a pipe line to lead out," Ansel corrected mildly. "And maybe a few more acres for a tank farm. But even then," he said, turning to Jonas, in his most soothing voice, "there'll be a lot of farm left. A big place like this won't be ruined because you lease the orchard and the back pasture."

"Can't tell about that," Jonas said. "What's a farm without any orchard?"

"There'll be enough money in this," Kirkwall said, "to set out fifty new orchards. They still sell apple trees, don't they? And there's plenty of land left to make an orchard. Right here in this front pasture would do. It isn't much use as a pasture. You never have anything in it but a few horses turned out on Sundays. It'd be a good place to start an orchard, and by now you need a new one. Half those apple trees back there are dying. A dry summer will be the end of them. Some spring they'll never come out."

What he said was true enough, and Jonas gazed at him shrewdly, surprised at his half-brother's observation. But he was not ready to give in. "A dry summer kills off young trees as quick as old," he said.

It was plain that he wouldn't be argued into an agreement, and when they left it was only with his repeated, "I'll have to think it over." They were exactly where they had been before.

Afterward the three of them sat chafing and futile and feeling outwitted, though there was no wit involved in this affair.

"The trouble is," Kirkwall said, "he's enjoying himself. He likes seeing us crawl. He'll come around when he's ready, but first he has to be stubborn like all the Sletters. We'll have to give him time."

They waited, because there was nothing else to do. They sent telegrams to their offices and held long telephone conversations with the Buckeye Gas Company, and they chafed through the golden days of early September. It was just a matter of time. Jonas would finally make up his mind, and

they could only wait till he was ready. Privately they calculated the possible royalties, and together they went to Sandusky and consulted the records of the Buckeye Company and pored over the yield that gas wells had produced in neighboring counties. In an urgent trip to Buffalo, Sterling extended the time for his obligations, and he made vague commitments on the basis of what lay under the surface of his father's orchard. Ansel smoked his pipe and felt guilty for prolonging his vacation.

"There's three men waiting for me to get back so they can go on a fishing trip," he said.

"Three men," Kirkwall repeated pointedly.

Ansel smiled blandly. "Yes, it takes three men to do my work." But beneath his smile he was nervous. He telegraphed for a report of the August business, and when the answer failed to come by return mail he worried for fear some disaster was being kept from him.

Kirkwall tramped restlessly over the orchard, sniffing the air for the taint that might be drifting under the laden boughs, and turning over in his mind the familiar problem of those real estate holdings on Cuyahoga Heights. He was sailing pretty close to the wind. A boom was coming, there were signs enough of that; but his titles were imperiled, and seeing the prospect of a seller's market the banks might not be loath to squeeze him out. They carry a man in stringent times, when it's good business to. But when the signs are right— A few thousand dollars might make so great a difference. And so he followed that faint invisible smoke between the orchard rows.

They were in this restless mind when a thin, stooped figure came shambling through the wood lot. "Where's Mr. Bradley? Where's Mr. Bradley?" And he didn't stop till he found Kirkwall pacing beneath the trees.

Kirkwall saw the excitement bursting the little man's face. "What's the trouble, Tatum?"

"Gas Company," Tatum said.

"Yes, what about it?"

Still breathless, the old man told his story. He was sitting on his doorstep watching the highway when he saw a big equipment truck of the Buckeye Gas Company drive by. He didn't think about it till he saw that they were stopping down the road. There the men opened the gate and drove in the lane to the Randall grounds. He remembered it was the same company that had surveyed the orchard, and he was curious. He went down to the line fence and saw them with their tripods taking the fall of the land, examining the surface, testing the rock formation down at the edge of the shore. This sort of thing was familiar to him. He had seen it happen in the gas regions of Seneca and Hancock counties, and he knew what this survey was for.

By this time Sterling had joined them, and the two brothers exchanged a worried look.

"That's why they've tried to hurry us up," Kirkwall said. "If they don't get our contract they'll buy up rights from Randall and drill there. They could tap the pool from that side and pump out our gas through wells beyond the line."

"Could they do that?" Sterling asked.

"I don't see why not."

"But why should they?"

"I don't know, but I'm going to find out." And he struck off through the orchard.

Tatum stood there a minute before he started home. "Come on, Sam," he muttered, looking around in a half-circle before he remembered. Then he shuffled back through the grove toward his doorstep.

When Kirkwall came back, he found Ansel and Sterling together. Kirkwall's face was angry. "It's only a surveying crew," he said. "They don't know anything except that they were told to look over the ground there. But it's easy to see what they're up to. If we haven't got the contract signed when they want it, they'll sign one with Randall and start to work over there."

Sterling shook his head. "That doesn't make sense. We brought them out here. Why should they think we can't give them a contract?"

"That's easy," Ansel said. He had dropped to the steps and was hugging a knee in his two hands. "You don't know Randall if you can't see through that. Somebody has told these people they'll never get a lease on Bradley land. Guess who."

"And then Randall offered them a lease across our line," Sterling finished.

Kirkwall nodded. "They're anxious to get started."

"But Jonas has still got to think it over," Ansel said with a wry smile.

Sterling wanted to try their father once more—to see if the agreement could not stand without Jonas's signature. But the others shook their heads. "That's not the way to

manage him. He'll call the whole thing off if he thinks we're trying to get around Jonas."

"Jonas—" Sterling said grimly. "There must be some way to handle him."

Ansel looked up with his rueful face. "That's what the man said when he hitched up the mule—"

Just then a train whistle rose and quavered beyond the fields. Ansel forgot his story while his eyes followed the rush of smoke across the lower sky.

6

The third day after his return Alan sat in the sunlight with a steamer rug around his shoulders, swallowing hard to keep the bitterness from choking in his throat. He was discovering so quickly how fickle one can be when he has no duty but to take the pulse of his own convalescence, how sharply he may pass from resignation to resentment. Rest and solicitude were getting in their work quickly. Already the first weakness was past, the first utter and obliterating weakness; now he was strong enough to rebel at the scant breath, the shallow weight in his breathing, the lightness in his head. Across the lake, out over the northern horizon, stood a row of magnificent thunderheads, like the sky in a heroic water color above the prairie. The cloud headlands stood poised there in the enormous blue, and near at hand sandpipers passed primly along the shore and sometimes a gull lifted with awkwardness that swiftly became grace. A white breaking washed insistently upon the sand. He stared at the horizon with the sound of the surf droning in his

ears, and in himself he felt that strife repeated. A few days ago he had wanted not to leave this place. But to be back like this, the voices commiserating, eyes watching him guardedly—to be back with a mark on him like this!

He thought till he was tired of thinking: A year, the doctor had said. Perhaps in a year. Probably—if he took the proper care. But a year—twelve months—that was a bitter sentence. And, what was worse, it shook his confidence, it clouded his knowledge of himself. He wanted to be strong and sure inside, but this was fatigue and confusion. And Donna. Donna's eyes so full of pity—a man does not want pity—and all the Murdock faces hostile, inspecting him. Perhaps in a year it would be different. A year. . . . His thoughts went in a circle, and at last he gave up the futile round.

Quickly now, without his bidding it, reality grew about him. When he left his own mind, another world was ready, and drew near. The sandy earth was warm under his body; it felt coarse and dry to the palms of his hands as he leaned against them, and he became aware of the dry September fragrance of withering grass and hemlock needles. There was a rustle in the green boughs above. Then he saw the abrupt bright markings and heard the elastic call of a flicker. With a scratching sound the bird circled the rough hemlock trunk, its eyes beaded and its sleek head thrusting at the scabrous bark. Suddenly the wings whirred with a sound like leather. Alan watched the firm flight sagging across blue sky to the pine tree halfway down the pasture shore. It was a thick tree, rooted in rock, its branches dark and storm-twisted. In spring its boughs were secret with

bird song; in winter its whole crown roared with wind. *Flicker, flicker, flicker, flicker, flicker. . . .* Now out of the dark branches, thinned by distance, came again the twanging rubbery call.

It is strange how aware an invalid can be. How the enforced quiet, the resignation, the humility, can bring him close to things. Did you ever see grass soaking up sunlight —or a tree being stroked by light, yielding to it, like seaweed to water—or the proud still passion of a tulip lifting its stem to flower in a crimson bell of silence—or the secret triumph and fulfillment of myrtle, spreading its rich green life in a forest shade? If the mind is quiet there is that swift, strange discovery—life crowding the earth and air, life that is hungry for realization, driven by the terrible love of being which all things know. (*In a single acre live as many worms and insects as there are people in America.*) Just to live, to breathe, to *be,* before the long gray night of nothing calls us back into oblivion. The restless flicker becomes a lump of mould, the flight of gulls and a meadow lark's song are dust at last. Life haunted by that nothingness, overshadowed by it; and clinging with blind need to being, the one profound and lonely truth. For to be is not to *not be;* and at whatever stages the sweet fever and pride of being come, there is that exultation.

Down below him, on the sand, Alan's eye caught two small objects: the dark wet shape of a field mouse, tiny and still, drowned in the surf, and the silver glint of a small fish belly, a grayling thrown on the sands to die. There was death, and he fell to wondering about that strange sharp shore line with its restless pacings; beauty and terror in that

frontier between two worlds so alien that the creatures of one could not draw a moment's breath in the other.

He sat there now, not thinking, but feeling the earth and the air, and he didn't hear her step until she was beside him. It took a minute for his eyes to find her, they seemed looking through her silently. When he spoke it was to disregard the question in her face.

"Did you ever feel a grain of sand?"

"Of course," she said. "I've had it in my eye. Probably got some in my hair now."

"I mean feel it with your mind, like a person."

"No," she said seriously. "I never did."

"It's funny how important it can be. It's been here so long. It has a past. It's been a grain of sand longer than people have had a language."

"History again," Donna said, shaking her head. "I wondered what was going through your mind."

Alan looked up and smiled wryly. "Not that," he admitted. "That is, not only that."

"What else?"

He shook his head. "It's not pleasant."

"Look," she pointed to the wind-streaked sky beneath the high white cliffs of cloud, "it's a perfect day for sailing. Let's go."

"Where to?"

"Anywhere. There's a freighter coming." Her eyes were on a feather of smoke far down the eastern shore. "We'll go out and take a look at her when she passes."

"We can do that from here."

Donna stood over him. "Come on. It'll do you good.

You need a change from sitting here like Gandhi meditating on grains of sand." She took a hand and pulled him to his feet. "You can't turn me down like this. It's the first time I've ever invited you to go anywhere."

Alan hitched the rug around his shoulders, and hand in hand they slipped down the sand bank and crossed the old wharf where the sailboat was bobbing in the choppy water. Donna jumped into the stern, and Alan let himself down slowly.

When he touched the rope, she stopped him. "My party. You sit down."

With quick hauls and a creaking of the pulley the gray try-sail slid up the small mast and began slatting in the breeze. Donna swung the boom around until the sail was full. The bow rose on the little ridges and pointed out toward blue water. The wharf slipped away behind them.

Donna sat in the stern sheets, one hand on the tiller and the other paying out rope as the boom swung around.

"Look at that sail," she said, glancing up the gray patched canvas. "Isn't it a disgrace! I told Kirk he'd have to get a new sail or I'd never be seen in the tub again. But he says his father won't listen. I guess Uncle Sterling is broke, all right. It was his boat, you know, to begin with."

Alan was silent, leaning on the gunwale. She saw that he did not want to talk, and their eyes went over the wind-stirred water to the white clouds massed in the north. Behind them, the Bradley terrace fitted into a longer shore line, with the beach colonies on one side and the white towers of the hotel and the scattered summer places following the curving bay to the lifted finger of the Wood End light.

Ahead of them the blue of Lake Erie flashed with sun. Far out a long low freighter was hull down, so that her raised poop and her forward superstructure showed like two separate bodies over the sea rim. Smoking toward them was the dark red hull of another vessel, her bow high and a scroll of water showing at her stem.

Quite suddenly the sail slatted and the boat lost steerageway. Donna swung the boom around. The canvas filled for a moment and then flopped again. Now she looked across the water to the distant freighter and saw the smoke hung out behind it in a windless fading.

"Wind's gone," she said.

Alan squinted, staring up at the limp sail. "Think it'll come up again?"

She pointed. "See the smoke out there? It's as calm as a church."

She went over to the mast and loosed the halyard. The sail slid down in a heap.

"Well, I haven't forgotten what's next." She fitted a pair of rowlocks and slipped oars through them.

Alan dropped his rug and stepped over. "Let me row."

She shook her head. "I said this is my party."

"Let me have one anyway," he insisted. Then he sank down in the stern sheets, his shoulders jerking and his face torn with his cough.

"Put the rug over you," Donna said. She tugged at the oars, working them awkwardly over the wide gunwales. Alan stared at the floor boards where a thin wash of water sloshed under the grating.

Silently they tied up at the old wharf and climbed out.

Across the warm white beach Donna sank down on the sand. "Not a very bright idea, was it?" she asked, smiling, her face flushed from exertion. "But I'm not surprised. That's the way it is when I go sailing."

Alan sat down beside her. But his voice didn't answer her banter. "I'll be glad when you're gone," he said quietly.

Her face changed, startled, and he went on in a pent rush of words:

"I hate your seeing me like this. And I hate them," he nodded up over the terrace toward the Homestead, "knowing I'm useless and helpless. I'm beaten, all right. But I don't want everybody looking at me like something in a cage."

She had seized his hand, and she clung tightly to it till their fingers were buried in the warm sand. "Don't, Alan. Don't say it. Don't feel that way. You know it isn't true."

"Yes, it's true," he said, his thin face all at once grown heavy. "Why don't they all go? It's past the time."

"They're only waiting to get the gas contract settled."

Alan's mouth tightened. "You mean they're waiting for Uncle Jonas to sign it."

She nodded.

"He'll never do it."

"If Grandpa would ask him to, he would."

"Is that what they're trying? Well, Grandpa won't ask him to. Why should he?"

"Why shouldn't he?"

They looked into each other's eyes and saw the cloudy pride and refusal there. Then Donna tossed her head. "Let's not start that again. Not us."

Alan bit his lip and stared at the sand.

"Do you really wish I weren't here, Alan?"

"Yes."

"Why? Is it any different between us because you're—"

"Maybe, for you."

"No, it isn't." Her level eyes searched his face.

He looked away. Across the sand the strong surf pounded in. Though the air was still, the water broke on the sandy bar and churned in a long white thunder over the shallows. He felt it striving in himself, the repeated protest and frustration.

"I don't want you to know me this way," he said at last. "The way I was, before I knew I had a lung half gone—the way I will be when it's better. But not this way." He bent his head lower. "I'm terribly ashamed, Donna."

She saw the bitterness in his face and she felt all at once, so that she never forgot the swift naked stab of it, the lonely and futile desire to bear another's pain. Quietly her fingers stroked his arm. "I love you more for it."

He shook his head. "That's pity."

She smiled ã sad and distant smile that went with her eyes to the far blue line of sky. When her gaze came back she sifted sand over his fingers there on the ground.

"Alan," she said, and waited for his eyes to come to her. "There's one kind of love that goes with enjoyment. When people do things together and run at life"—her eyes went across to the booming breakers and then came back to him —"as though they could meet it like a white surf, swift and high. It's marvelous and exciting, and some people think that's the only way love can be. But there's another kind,

too. It goes with hoping, and being afraid, and wanting to protect and heal. When people can face uncertainty together and share the strength they wouldn't have alone. That kind of love is terrifying—and oh, so precious!" She turned her face away to the cloud towers over the lake, and her voice was richer than Alan had ever heard it. "I've only known that kind for two days, but I've found it's the only kind that's real." She breathed deeply and looked at him with a faint smile, her face lifted and her eyes very bright. "You don't know how proud I am to have it."

A chorus broke out behind them, and her cousins came racing down the sand cliff in bathing suits. They called to Donna on their way across the beach, but their voices stopped when they saw Alan beside her. Then they were plunging into the white hedges of the surf.

"Go ahead and have a swim," Alan said. "I'll have to go back anyway." He turned up her arm to see the wrist watch, and said with a wry smile: "It's past time for my crackers and milk."

They climbed the steps together. "Remember," she said, "smile when you eat them. Or they won't do you any good."

VI

Loud Blew the Wind

I

Quite suddenly, without any warning, Timothy Bradley came home. He stepped off the train at Pride's Crossing, a tall stooped man with a handsome white mustache and the distant gray eyes of a wanderer. He walked the three miles to the Homestead in a thoughtful shuffle. On the way his face was constantly changing, softening when he remembered the white slant of a sycamore in a field or the shaggy bark of those Ocean County hickories that stood clustered at a fence corner, opening in surprise at the sunlit towers of the Farview, and frowning when he stepped into the streaming life of U. S. Number 20 with billboards shutting off the fields.

He went directly through the wood lot to the Homestead, wondering at the newer houses grouped among the trees, and when he stood at the veranda steps he hesitated a moment while his eyes went over the terrace to the lake's blue space.

While he waited a figure crossed the porch and stood in the screen door, suspiciously. "Are you looking for some one?"

Timothy's soft hat came off and under the mustache his mouth smiled gently.

"Mr. Bradley, if you please."

There was a note in the man's voice that startled Rosemary, and something in his face made her look more closely. "There are three Mr. Bradleys here." Then she realized there was a fourth. Quickly she added, "Perhaps you mean the farmer, Jonas Bradley."

There was a sound behind her and Roger appeared from the inner hall, walking with two canes, his shoulders bent. He shuffled onto the porch and sank down in a wicker chair. Carefully he hooked his two canes over the chair's right arm. Then his eyes came up. He was startled to see a lean face with wide gray eyes fixed on him.

In two strides Timothy's long legs climbed the steps. He brushed past Rosemary and stood beside the old man's chair.

"Father—" he said.

Roger's head was lifted, his eyes searching the strange face till the years dropped away from it at last and it was strange no longer.

"Timothy," he said. "Timothy. . . . Where have you come from, son?"

Soon it was known in all the Bradley houses that Timothy had come back from the West. Nearly forty years ago he had set forth, restless and confident, with a far light in his eyes, and now with slow step and stooping shoulders but still with distance in his face, he had returned.

"The idea!" Rosemary repeated in the big living room. "Coming back like this, without a word to any one. I thought he was a veterinarian, or a dairy inspector."

"With that mustache?" Ansel asked, smiling. "Why, he

could pass for Mark Twain, if he'd get some white linens."

"But what is he doing here?" Rosemary demanded.

Ansel shrugged lightly. "Come home, I'd guess. Looks old, doesn't he? And he can't be much past sixty. Prob'ly had a hard life out there. Never had a home all these years, I shouldn't wonder." He looked up at his wife. "Is he going to stay here?"

Rosemary threw up her hands. "Grandpa told Hulda to fix the north bedroom. That's all I know." In her voice indifference was edged with hostility.

"Where is he now?"

"Out looking around the place." She was silent for a minute, and then she turned to her husband quickly. "I must say, Ansel, this has been the most disturbing summer. Grandpa nearly dying, and Donna out with that boy, and now we've got one of them in the house."

"One of who?"

"Sletters. What do you think?"

"Oh, that's right. I'd forgot he was on that side. In fact I'd forgot there was another one of them. Well"—the little lines crinkled about his eyes—"he's been away long enough so he ought to be safe."

"I don't know about that," Rosemary said.

She was still frowning when Ansel had an idea which carried him outside. Soon he had found his brothers-in-law, and the three of them set out to intercept Timothy in his wanderings.

"I hope he hasn't seen Jonas," Sterling said.

"Not likely," Ansel thought. "He's only been out of the house a few minutes."

"There." Kirkwall pointed toward the barns. "Somebody's in the stable."

They found him in the fragrant twilight, peering up at the dim mounds of hay. Through the cupola, long stripes of sunlight fell, and a dance of motes was suspended in those bright bars above him.

One glance at him even in the half-light was enough to show the stooped shoulders, the gentled mouth, the tired and distant eyes. They knew they were looking at a wanderer and a failure. It pleased them to find him so.

Kirkwall stepped ahead of the others. "I'm your brother Kirkwall," he said, offering his hand. "This is Sterling, and Rosemary's husband, Ansel Crain. We just heard you've come back. We've been looking for you."

Timothy shook hands around. His grip was warm and gentle and friendly, and his gray eyes peered at his brothers in the twilight.

"It's a long time since you've been here," Sterling said with a stiff little laugh.

"Yes," Timothy agreed. "A long time." He was pleased, and a little puzzled, at their welcome.

They stood there making a lame conversation, uttering banalities about time and change, trying vainly to feel acquainted across a gap of years; and chafing inwardly, till Ansel said:

"As a matter of fact, you're just in time to help us with a business matter."

The others looked relieved, and Timothy's eyes came back from exploring the lofty mows.

Kirkwall took up the business. "It's a gas development.

We've found gas on this land. Enough to make a big thing if we're all agreed on it. Did you ever see a natural gas development?"

"Gas?" Timothy repeated. "I ran a line for a hundred and twenty miles in California. That was before the earthquake—nineteen-three or -four, it must have been."

Three faces beamed at him. "You're just the man we need." Kirkwall said with genuine enthusiasm. "Come on out to the orchard and see where these wells will go."

So they were out of the absurd dusk of the stable, and feeling freed from their first constraints, they explored the orchard. Timothy asked questions that none of them could answer about anticlinal structure, and after he had puzzled his memory a little he spoke of joint cracks and a contact of sedimentary and crystalline rocks.

"The earthquake ruined us out there," he said, and his eyes seemed looking back through all those thirty years. "Broke the main lines in fifty places, and before we could get them all sealed up we'd lost our pressure. Then there wasn't capital enough to get started again. An eastern outfit took over what was left to cover our indebtedness, and that was the last I saw of it. I struck out for Arizona—copper mining." And his face had a softened excitement.

"What we've got here," Sterling said, calling Timothy back to an Ohio orchard, "looks like a sure thing. There's no profit in farming, particularly a place like this with high taxes and new assessments every year. But the gas is here, and it's ours to profit by."

Timothy's mind was still in California. "I was in Sacramento County—working in the assayer's office—when a

couple of miners came in and told us they had opened up a pocket that showed good ore. Their samples were fair, and we went out to look at the pocket. Before we got to it we smelled something, and sure enough it was gas they had opened up. We forgot about the ore because that gas was pure gold if we could get it to the cities."

"It's the same thing here," Kirkwall said, and Timothy nodded earnestly.

As they talked on, Timothy's voice warmed and a happy light grew in his eyes. He looked about the orchard and to the lake's broad light beyond, and he was glad to be home after all those years and to find his place again so quickly.

When they went back to the Homestead, Kirkwall brought a typed agreement and uncapped a fountain pen.

"Father wants us all to agree before the gas rights are leased. We've all signed. You can add your signature below."

While Timothy scratched his name the brothers looked pleased.

"All we need now is Jonas's signature," Kirkwall added. "You haven't seen him yet?"

Timothy hadn't. They sat pleasantly together on the veranda, and Kirkwall made it clear that Jonas was reluctant to let the contract go. "He's a farmer, you know. He hasn't ever thought about anything but growing crops on the land. Of course he hates to see the old orchard abandoned."

While they were talking Timothy remembered with a sudden realization how alien he and his brothers had felt in his father's house when Grace Murdock's children were

growing up there. His mind went back, dimly, to that past when he had worked in the fields with Peder and Jonas while Grace Murdock's children took music lessons and drank lemonade on the terrace. Before he had left there had been a difference between those two sets of Bradley sons. Now he began to wonder what the years had been while he was gone.

"We've all talked to him," Sterling said, "but he's pretty well set in his ways. Maybe if you'd say something he might listen."

Then they saw a puzzled stare in Timothy's face, and they followed his eyes to the tall dark figure coming through the trees. She climbed the steps and lingered at the door.

"Where's Jo-Jo?" she asked emptily. Then she was gone.

Timothy's gaze followed her into the house. "Who is that?" he asked, still staring.

"Ursula."

"Ursula?" he repeated.

"Didn't you know about her, how she was hurt?"

He shook his head. Their letters had never mentioned Ursula.

He was still thinking about the strangely desolate figure, trying to connect her with the golden-haired child he could faintly remember from his youth, when the brothers left. They said a last word about Jonas and the agreement, but they could see that Timothy's mind was elsewhere.

In a few minutes Hulda announced dinner, and Ansel led him into the dining room. Roger was already seated at the head of the table, and Rosemary was hovering near. The

girls came rushing in, but they brought up sharp at sight of the strange gray-haired man, lonely and tired-looking, with the distant eyes.

Ansel made the explanation. "My daughters, Timothy. Donna and Ruth. Girls, this is your Uncle Timothy."

The girls looked startled. They had never heard of him before. But when the gray eyes smiled and the tall man bowed they found themselves smiling up at him.

Then a silent figure brushed past them and Timothy's eyes were on her. "Ursula," Ansel said—her head came round at the familiar name—"this is Timothy, our brother."

Timothy bowed again, and Ursula stood there in that strange sad self-possession. Finally her lips parted and a low voice questioned, "Where's Jo-Jo?"

Roger's bearded face looked proud as they all sat down, Timothy and Donna and her father on one side, Rosemary and Ruth on the other, Ursula at the table's foot. When Hulda set a platter of golden lake trout before him, he forgot to serve. He was rejoicing that his far-wandering son had come home at last.

At his side Rosemary sat stiffly. This was the first time in thirty-six years that a Sletter had sat down to dinner with a Murdock, and she was not sure that the fish would not stick in her throat. The more she thought about it, the more indignant she became. Across the table Timothy was opening his napkin, his hands very brown and wrinkled against the linen's white; in his mind was the dim presence of all the years and wanderings before his journey had brought him home again. Still prolonging the moment, Roger surveyed the table with that warmth in his face, and

the two girls sat wondering at this sudden uncle who had taken shape. Even Ursula seemed to sense a difference; her eyes were troubled and fascinated by Timothy's white mustache, and her lips were moving as though she whispered to herself.

It was Hulda who spoke, standing at the old man's side. "Them fish ain't no good cold, Mr. Bradley. I'll take 'em back on the stove again if you ain't going to serve."

Roger rebuked her gently, looking up at the heavy, frowning face. "Just a minute for old times, Hulda. You remember when all the boys were at the table? Here's Timothy now, come back again."

At his words Rosemary straightened. She pushed her chair back. "I don't care for any dinner." She took her younger daughter's arm. "Come, Ruth." And she looked sternly across the table. "Come, Donna."

Roger's gray eyes flashed, and his lean face was quickly strong. "What do you mean, Rosemary?"

Rosemary stood behind her chair, her lips tight pressed, her bosom swelling. "For thirty-six years they didn't set foot in this house. Now I don't intend to have one at my table."

Timothy looked startled, his eyes swiftly faltering. A sudden loneliness was unmasked in his face. He laid his napkin on the table and was getting to his feet, but Roger's voice held him there. He opened his mouth uncertainly to speak, when Rosemary repeated sharply: "Donna, are you coming?"

Donna threw back her head. "No, I'm not coming. I'll stay with Uncle Timothy."

With a commanding look at Ansel, Rosemary stalked from the room, pulling Ruth after her.

Ansel smiled his country doctor smile. "Excuse me. I'll try to make peace." He folded his napkin thoughtfully and left the table.

Then there were left Roger and Ursula, with Donna and the newcomer Timothy between them. Donna smiled up at Timothy's bleak face. "You'll just have to get used to us, Uncle Timothy. It's the Bradley way."

"Them fish—" Hulda reminded.

Roger reached for the serving fork.

2

Alan leaned against the wild apple tree while a fit of coughing racked him. When it was done the ground swam before his eyes and the sunset color swam over all the lake. He clung to the tree trunk till the dizziness should leave him. Slowly his eyes focused; the horizon line resumed its firmness over the lake, and looking around he saw Donna across the terrace.

She came quickly to him. "Alan, did you know—" Then she saw the weak tears in his eyes. "Oh, my dear! What is it?"

"Just coughing." He smiled, and the narrowing lids spilled drops down his cheek. "It's over now."

She searched his face anxiously.

"What's happened, Donna? You're full of something. What is it?"

"I'm full of you, Alan. You don't know how terrible it is."

"Yes, I do. But you started to say something."

"Oh!" She smiled quickly and held up a hand. On her wrist was a silver bracelet studded with three oval turquoises and hammered with the four-winds symbol and the grotesque thunderbird. "Guess who gave it to me."

Alan scowled. "That chap at the Farview."

"No." She shook her head promptly.

"I don't care then."

She raised her hand again. "Isn't it stunning?"

"I wish I'd given it to you if you like it so."

"Alan, you'd never guess. It was Uncle Timothy."

"Uncle Timothy?" Alan had almost forgotten the half-real uncle he had never seen, whose infrequent letters from the West had never suggested a person who might assume reality. "He sent it to you?"

"No, he gave it to me. He's here."

"What's he doing here?"

"He's come back to stay. Oh, you'll like him, Alan. He's been everywhere and done everything. He looks tired, and yet he's handsome looking too. He's had a hard life. I'm sure of that. But when he smiles you forget everything but how he's looking at you."

Alan was still puzzled. "When did he come?"

"This afternoon. He walked all the way from the station. He came to the big house; he didn't remember any of the rest of them. When was he here, Alan? I can't get a thing out of Mother."

"He was my father's youngest brother." Alan gazed across

the lake, trying to remember how they had talked of Timothy in past years. "He went away soon after my father and mother were married. Out West, somewhere. He wrote once or twice a year. I'd almost forgotten about him."

"There he is." Donna pointed back toward the Homestead. "He's coming now."

Alan turned to see the stooped figure crossing the terrace. He walked with a deliberate shuffling step, never quite straightening his knees, as though he were making an ascent. Twenty years of plodding up steep mining trails had given him that gait.

"Come on." And Donna took his hand. They met him beside the hemlock windbreak.

"Uncle Timothy, this is my cousin Alan."

They shook hands. "Alan," Timothy repeated, studying him with those remote gray eyes. "You're Peder's son. I remember when they wrote about you."

They talked in the growing dusk, and Timothy seemed to belong to the dimness; his voice was deep and gentle, and his eyes seemed brooding as he asked about the shore lights, the illumined Farview towers, the distant luminance at Cedar Point, the rhythmic flashing from Wood End.

At last he smiled down at Donna. "I'll not upset your family life tomorrow. I'm going to Jonas's."

They watched his slow steps in the twilight.

"What did he mean by that?" Alan asked.

Donna sighed. "Oh, we had a scene. Mother left the table. She wouldn't eat with a Sletter."

Alan's face darkened. He dug his heel in the sandy ground, silently.

"Alan! I like him. I'm glad he's come."

His face was still heavy. "It only makes things worse."

"I don't think so."

"Why?"

"Perhaps he'll help us, Alan."

He looked up at her. "Help us?"

"Yes. He signed the orchard lease. He's had some experience with gas lines. He believes in it. If he can get Jonas to sign—don't you see?"

His voice was bitter. "Then they wouldn't hate us so. They'd have their way. They could stand us a little better. Is that what you mean?"

"Don't be stubborn, Alan. If they can agree on the lease, of course they'll feel better about everything." She slipped her fingers into his uneasy hand. "Don't you see? He might help us."

Alan shook his head. "It won't make any difference with Uncle Jonas. There's no use hoping for that." When he looked at her in the half-light there was bitterness in his eyes and his mouth straightened. "Donna, you'd better go on your own side. They won't ever give up hating us. If they feel that way you'll have to go with them."

She had his face in her hands, and her eyes were swimming. "Stop it, Alan. You know I couldn't."

He pulled her hands away. "I'm not worth it, Donna. I'm sick and useless. Don't fight against them. I'm really not worth it."

But when she kissed him his arms were desperately around her, trembling. "Oh, don't ever let them take you away from me. I love you so."

Her breath was against his face, and it was a moment before she could whisper, "You're worth everything to me."

3

"He looks like Grandpa," Alan told his mother that evening. But the next morning when he saw Timothy in the broad light, his eyes dreaming over Lake Erie, his mouth quiet and gentle under the long mustache, he knew otherwise. It was only a superficial resemblance, after all, that Timothy Bradley bore to his father. Beneath that likeness was a difference; quickly Alan saw how great a difference it was. Timothy was not a strong man but a weak one. All his life long he had been a wanderer; and wandering gives men shrewdness and tolerance and a melancholy realism that is understanding, but it does not give them strength. Roger Bradley had a stubborn will; for seventy years it had grown strong in that black earth of Ocean County. But Timothy had wandered uncertainly in Montana and New Mexico, in Wyoming and Nevada. At the end he was mellow and pathetic; the iron had not hardened in him.

It was not all loss. Alan could see in those gray eyes that stayed so remote under the fine white arch of brows the dreams and memories that were a compensation. And it was in his talk as well; no other Bradley ever talked with such a quiet ardor. This man had watched an empire's growth, and if he was not one of its victors that didn't matter greatly. He had seen it and had played his part in twenty different ways—copper mining below Navajo Point in the Grand Canyon, a false lead and a fiasco,

but there was the steep trail zigzagging up the ocher-colored cliffs, beneath the vast red towers the Kaibab pack-trains plodding, and sunrise throwing purple shadows across a gulf of silence; cattle raising in the plains beyond Durango, a failure, but there was the great herd drifting over the range with their heads pointed all one way, the water holes trampled and the adobe hoof-marks baking in the sun, at evening on the mesa the Mexican goat girl with sunset in her eyes leading the music of those bells over the sagebrush slopes, and in the distance Shiprock and the broken table-lands above the vague blue deserts of New Mexico; an irrigation project up the Snake River, a land speculation with insufficient water, but a green dream while it lasted, before the streams ran dry; natural gas in California, and then the earthquake, wind, and fire; lumbering in Oregon, and a disastrous bout with the monopoly but not before the schooners had whistled under the hills in the Columbia River and the sawmills had whined all night and the sharp cedar fragrance was like frost in the air; silver mining on Yankee Hill in the shadow of snow peaks, a lonely venture foredoomed by lack of planning and the want of capital, but the great hush of the Rockies, the naked ledges and the shining range, the iron grace of junipers at timber line, the roar of snow water running off in spring—many things were left him.

It had all ended ingloriously, like life, not something in a book; thirty years of seeking fortune, and then ten years of drumming the little Colorado towns for a seed company.

A seed salesman. They sat under the last of the hemlocks, Alan with a rug about his shoulders though the day was

soft, and he had only to ask a question and lift his face to the old man, older than he should have been, and Timothy was ready like an old man to talk.

"All those mountain towns. I tell you I can see them now wedged in those gulches"—his eyes dwelling on the blue meadows of Lake Erie—"Black Hawk, Central City, Georgetown, Silver Plume, Glenwood, Silverton, Durango. They all look alike, and yet I can see them separate as those ships out there. It was either those mining towns, mighty near empty now, with the streets steep as a ladder and half the roofs broken with some winter's snow, or it was those dry land towns on the plains—Julesburg, Greeley, La Junta."

All those towns on the wind-swept plains, under the cold and empty sky, or the remote fabulous towns on the western slope, Steamboat Springs, Montrose, Grand Junction. For ten years he had made the rounds, stopping in frame hotels where snow blew under the drafty doors, sitting around the hot stoves with other lonely men, men who had learned to talk without feeling, their eyes all distant from each other. He still knew the train schedules: the narrow-gauge C. & S. out of Denver at 8:18, the Burlington across the plains at 7:00 and north to Fort Collins at 6:15, the D. & R. G. out of Pueblo for Canyon City at 2:55, the Santa Fe for Raton at 10:20, the Denver and Salt Lake to Boulder at 7:10. He had watched the sudden darkness come in the Moffat tunnel on the cut-off and had seen the cold sunset flaring over the peaks from Yankee Doodle Lake and felt the icy wind blowing through Tennessee Pass more times than he could remember.

It was an inglorious end, like life. Thirty years of ardor and of dreaming, then the slow trains between the bleak red stations; the naked little towns, not a tree in them, and the drab lobbies of the inevitable Commercial House. General Grant spent a summer at the Teller House in Central City, and when he got off the stagecoach there was a pavement of solid silver blocks laid there for him to step on. But now the coyotes slink down the rocky streets of Nevadaville and all night they howl in the empty stamp mills above the ruined sluiceway.

Timothy's eyes roved over the wind-streaked blue of Lake Erie, with a mare's-tail of cloud in the infinite sky, but he was seeing the desolate gulches and the empty plains. Ten years had left the land stamped firmly; he couldn't close his eyes to it. While he talked his voice was earnest like those plains, somber and unrelieved, and there was space and loneliness in what he said. You picture a farm up there by the Wyoming line—the gaunt young turkeys stalking over the barnyard, the cattle standing by the iron water tank, the windmill creaking its rusty blackbird song up in the empty sky. You see the rawboned Swedish farmers clumping up and down the board walks of Julesburg on Saturday night. You think of their long migration, of all the miles they have come over land and water to that place. When their Saturday night is ended and they drive back across the prairie, the men wad tobacco in their mouths and the women stare over the dark cold fields. And all at once you know that American people have a great lonely place in their thoughts.

For only America could have in its heart a waste like

this. On the shores of the Atlantic the massed weight of cities, smoky and vast, transcendent with their towers, climbing into freedom and space; in the midlands the lusty young cities, the wide fields of grain, and the smoking stacks of sheet mills making a horizon for farmers mowing hay; and by the ultimate Pacific the white orchards that climb the coastal hills, the dark webbed streets of cities with the uproar growing, and again the granite towers lifting into light. But in the heart of all this land a desert and cold ranges, with no sign of man's possession. Squaw Mountain, tranquil and unapproachable as death, Rabbit Ear, aloof like something in the Book of Kings; America, with Atlantic City on one margin and Santa Monica on the other, has solitudes in its heart.

All this was in Timothy's talk (his eyes on the blue quiet of Lake Erie). Thirty years of hanging on the skirts of fortune, a dozen times about to strike it rich; always wandering farther, always a failure. He hadn't the iron in him. And as Alan looked into his face, the distant gentle eyes and the broken mouth, he saw written there the rootlessness of wandering. For he was not a wanderer at heart but a man looking for permanence.

Why had he come back at last? A little longer, a few more years, and they would have found him one morning in the hard bed in a hotel room, his shoes arranged on the floor, his socks draped from a chair's seat, waiting. He would not live forever like his father. It was not lack of health, but lack of life, another matter. That lonely West, lonely and grand, heroic and ultimate, is youth's country. Not for a man whose claims are all abandoned; not a fit

place for death. When a man is done, give him the roof-tops of his city, the medley of ship-filled harbors, the life of canyoned streets; or give him the warm and answering earth of fields tamed with the plow and harvest. That other land is too primordial—the vast indifferent flow of years over the massive ranges—too naked and too lonely to frame death.

4

Apart as she was, Ursula could be strangely sensitive to the life about her. She seemed to have some faculty, not understanding but intuitive, which informed her in a hidden way. Years before, when word came that Sterling lay in a swift crisis at the Buffalo Surgeons' Hospital, Ursula seemed to know. They all sat silent in the living room, waiting for the telephone, and Ursula waited with the same drawn face and her fingers tense in her lap. She got up at last, and peering out the rain-driven windows where a summer storm lashed the lake, she asked piteously, "Where's Jo-Jo? Where's Jo-Jo?" so that they looked at each other in a strange fear.

Now, with the constraint tightening between the two families, she seemed to sense the trouble. There was a tension in the house and over the terrace, and even upon the quiet shore the surf was a protest, over and over. In their father's study, or on the veranda, or walking through the orchard rows, with restless eyes and urgent voices the three men held their councils. Frequently they drove off to Cleveland, and came back tired and without accomplish-

ment. At the table in the Homestead there was a weight of silence. Since Timothy had made his single appearance the meals were strained with the family strife, and though he was no longer at the table his presence seemed to continue there. Roger was silent with a slow and futile anger as he looked down the table that had no place for his son who had come home at last. He spoke no word, but the signs of his anger were plain: the glint in his gray eyes, the slight sharp bristling of his brows, his mouth drawn tighter. At his right hand Donna sat with her face unyielding, drawn up against her mother, taking another side.

Ursula could not know these things, but in another way she seemed aware of them. She studied the faces at the table with a candid anxiety. Frequently her lips moved without speaking, as though she formed words from her concern. Once she completely forgot her meal, and when they left the table her food had been untouched. Hulda remonstrated loudly: "Here, Miss Ursula, you ain't had a bite of food. You'll be sick, that way." But Ursula looked through and beyond her. "Where's Jo-Jo?" Since Timothy had been there at the table and her large eyes had fixed on his worn face with the deep brown color and the white mustache, her eyes were newly haunted. She was distraught; when serenity and order left the lives about her she had no access to any of her own. Sometimes she seemed profoundly self-possessed; but when there was trouble among those she belonged to, she knew in some obscure way the oppression of it.

Now she asked more urgently her desolate question, "Where's Jo-Jo?" looking sadly in her father's face;

"Where's Jo-Jo?" plucking at Rosemary's sleeve; "Where's Jo-Jo?" surprising her brothers in their impatient and absorbed futility. And as though she sensed the source of trouble, into the other houses she went—"Where's Jo-Jo?" searching the Sletters' faces, or accosting Jonas in the fields; "Where's Jo-Jo?" and not stopping for any answer but hurrying on to look half fearfully at the newcomer, Timothy, walking in the shore pasture where she had been marked so many years before—"Where's Jo-Jo? Where's Jo-Jo?"

All her desires seemed intensified. She went out wandering, restlessly, not in the serene melancholy that was hers but in need and unquiet. Back she came hastily with armloads of September foliage, as though her simple love of bringing out-of-doors into a house could make the Homestead right again. She left sprays of goldenrod to fill the hall with their strong sunlight, and clusters of bittersweet upon the long dark mantel, brightening the unpeopled living room; she carried clumps of pine branches with the coarse cones rough and brown amid the waxed green fans of needles, and then she was off again for bursting pods and dry stalks flowered with thistledown.

Her voice might surprise them at any moment, in darkness on the veranda or in sunlight on the shore, "Where's Jo-Jo?" —and there was a new affliction in it. They could not fail to notice, though their minds were on concerns of their own. Rosemary studied her sister's pale tense face at dinner, and when Ursula's haunted eyes met hers she put her gaze down with a curious guilt. The meals grew silent there.

The brothers wondered at her. "She's not herself lately,"

said Kirkwall, looking after the restless figure when she had come upon them in the orchard.

Sterling went on with his question. "What could he do," he repeated, "if we had them begin drilling? He'd have to sign as soon as he saw we meant to—"

But their eyes were all on Ursula, and he broke off when they saw her stop among the trees. She looked around wildly, and they were near enough to see the breaking in her face. Then her voice lifted. "Jo-Jo! Where's Jo-Jo!" And she hurried to the shore.

They came back slowly to their problem, but their minds were divided as they talked.

"No, Sterling, we'll never do it that way," Ansel said, and Kirkwall nodded.

Ursula called again, and they were silent and uneasy as the cry came through the trees.

More than the others, Roger watched her with a deepening trouble. Seeing the affliction in her face, his anger turned to something not so strong and more oppressing. For the first time in his life he was ready to pity himself. At the end, to have it like this—the line sharpening between them, the faces all resolute with antagonism, Rosemary keeping up the bitterness and Jonas unwilling to give in, even though he would profit with them. Roger Bradley was a strong man still, but strength could not diminish what he felt. They had defeated his affections, the easiest victory. That knowledge came to him with a curious hurt, for it was through defeating themselves that they reached him this way. And now in Ursula's face he saw how mysteriously she suffered from it, too.

5

Two useless ones together, Alan thought ruefully as he sat with Timothy in the sunlight. And yet there was a contentment in being with his uncle; this man had made his peace with life. About him was an enduring quiet, a mood of mountains. It was as substantial and unconscious as that, and yet it was plainly visible in those lines written in his face that long ago had assumed its marks, and not unwillingly. And it was in his voice, even and unhurried and seeming to come from some deep center in him, as though he could not speak lightly or without fixing all his thought on what he said.

Across the terrace Alan saw the Murdock uncles entering the orchard, and he knew the difference between their avidness, their reaching out at life, and the quiet of this man beside him. Timothy liked to have something in his hands —now it was a piece of rough-seamed rock that he was picking at with his brown fingers—but that was only a faint edge of rhythm which defined more clearly the composure within. Unlike him, Sterling Bradley might sit as still as stone, seeking quiet and permanence; the need of them was in him. But his stillness was not quiet, and beneath that surface his life was clenched and unresting.

Then his thought was broken. "You ever see a piece of gold ore, son?"

Alan came back to the man beside him. "No, I don't think I have."

Timothy held up the piece of rock in his hand. "Here's a sample, gold and copper in it. They're likely to be to-

gether. See this seam?" He ran a brown forefinger along a vein in the quartz. It was powdered with yellow.

Alan took the rock in his own hands, feeling the rough dry surfaces. "How much is it worth?"

"Oh, not much. It takes a lot of that stuff to produce anything. Twelve dollars a ton, maybe. They break it up and wash the metals out with acid."

"Where'd it come from?"

"Let's see." He took the piece back in his hand and studied it a moment. "Bald Mountain Mine. Above Black Hawk. All the Colorado rock has that light color in it, but you only get that quartz shading in Bald Mountain. The mine is shut down now."

He reached into his pocket and found another sample. "This here is silver and lead. See the difference in the vein in it? It came out of another mountain, over the western slope. Ouray, likely," he added, frowning at the rock.

They sat in the sun until the morning freshness was giving way to heat. Alan tried to keep his mind on the old man's words and to picture the steep towns in those Colorado gulches and the raw slopes where the shafts were driven in. But he couldn't forget the dull pull that kept him listening for voices from the Homestead and the sudden hammering in his heart when a figure moved on the veranda.

Once he coughed, rocking there on the ground, giving way with his shoulders before that hacking. His eyes were blurred when it was finished.

Timothy peered at him gravely. "I had a pardner coughed that way. It was up on Yankee Hill. Sometimes it wore

him out." His eyes swung out to the lake and then came back quickly. "Is that why you're staying around here?"

"Yes," Alan said, his mouth tightening. "Invalid."

"That's hard on a young fellow. Take me now, I could stand it. But you're just ready to start out."

Alan stared at the shore. "I had a job in Chicago. I got sick on the way there, last week. So they sent me back here to drink milk and sit in the sun and sleep twelve hours a night."

Timothy nodded. "Hard medicine for a young fellow. How long does it last?"

"They say a year might be enough. If I stay quiet." He looked down the curving shore. "It'll be quiet enough here. When the summer people go, this place is empty as a desert."

"Well," Timothy said, smiling gently, "I've not got much to do myself. I'll help you pass the time."

"I've been thinking about that," Alan said. "I'm glad you're here."

His words brought a quick and timid joy into the old man's eyes, and seeing it Alan knew suddenly how tentative his home-coming had been, and what a stranger one could be after forty years had passed.

Soon the hot sun got them to their feet, and they started aimlessly back through the wood-lot shade. The strong shadows lay among the dark maple trunks, and a cool air came up from the unmowed grass. Over toward the barns they saw a figure sitting on the stoop of a small stone building, staring at the road.

"Do you remember Tatum?" Alan asked.

"Tatum?"

"Tatum Young. He worked for Grandpa off and on."

"Tatum Young," Timothy repeated, and shook his head. "I don't know. I remember some of the hands. Maybe he was one of them."

"No. You'd remember him all right. He probably came after you had gone."

They approached the stone hut, and Tatum moved over on the stoop. "Howdy, Alan." The old man put out a habitual hand to move the dog away. "Si' down."

Alan nodded to Timothy. "My father's brother," he said, and Tatum muttered, "Glad to meet you."

"He's been out West," Alan explained.

"West?" Tatum repeated. "Whereabouts?"

"All over," Alan said.

Tatum's blue eyes sharpened. "You been in Nevada, Mr. Bradley?"

"Nevada—yes." The Ohio fields became the Forty Mile Desert from Tonopah, the seas of sagebrush swimming in the heat-filled distance and the vague white salt beds with their blue mirages, the cool blue mountains of illusion, beneath the stark red range of the Panamints. The heat, the stillness, the yawning empty desert, and the vast blue gulf of sky. "Nevada. Yes, I was there."

"Well, what I want to know is do they have any automobiles in Nevada?"

"Automobiles? Yes, they have some cars out there."

"What color are the licenses?"

"I couldn't say."

Alan saw the puzzled look in Timothy's eyes. "Tatum collects license numbers," he explained. "There's a lot of

travel on this highway. He's got cars from nearly everywhere."

"Ev'ry state in the Union," Tatum declared, "except Nevada. And I got Mexico and District of Columbia and seven differ'nt parts of Canada. But I cain't get Nevada. I got to wonderin' whether they have automobiles there."

"They have them, all right," Timothy assured him. "But you see there aren't many people in Nevada. In the whole state there aren't as many people as in one city in Ohio."

Tatum looked impressed. "Must be a lonely place," he said.

"Yes, it is. Empty, anyway. A place don't get lonely till there's people there and they've gone. But Nevada ain't ever had any more life in it than it's got now. It's mostly desert. Little towns, sometimes a hundred miles apart, and a few ranches in the valleys. Only about 70,000 people in the whole state, and it's a big state, too."

Tatum looked thoughtful. "A hundred miles apart," he repeated. "They're prob'ly busy gettin' from one town to the next one. They ain't got time to come all the way across here. Some of 'em must go somewhere, though. They wouldn't stay out there all their life."

"Yes, some of them come East," Timothy said. "When the mines run out, they pack up and move on somewhere."

"Well, all I hope is one of 'em comes along here," Tatum said, bringing his eyes back to the road. "There, what's that?" He pointed toward an olive drab truck with a flapping canvas hood. "Another guv'ment number," he said in disgust, but he printed it in his book.

The truck roared past and then they saw a load of men standing under the arched canvas. They shouted at the three figures sitting on the stoop, and Tatum waved a grudging hand.

"Relief workers," he said. "That's the third lot to go past here this morning."

"Relief," Timothy repeated, his eyes distant again. "I saw a whole trainload of them at Kansas City. Somebody said they came out of a bread line." He thought about it for a moment, and then he went on, frowning: "I remember how they piled the buffaloes up on the plains and cut the hides off of them. Sometimes they ate the steaks out of the hump, sometimes not. That wasn't fifty years ago, and now they've got men on relief all over the country. And bread lines right there on the prairies, in Omaha and Kansas City." He shook his head.

While Timothy was talking, Tatum cocked his head and looked up like a gray old rabbit. "I remember when there was deer going to waste right here in Ohio. One winter, down in Adams County, a whole herd of deer was in there by Serpent Crick. I quit a horse farm near Peebles and went on south. I saw them deer in the valley and they looked like a herd of cattle feeding in there. The mud along the crick was cut up by their hooves till it looked like a barnyard. I don't know how many animals there was, but when them farmers got the word around there wasn't a deer left. They still got their hides hangin' in the barns down there and their heads stuck up on the walls."

He spat a brown arc in the sunlight and went on: "I worked at a place that next year, if I remember, where they

had three heads. They didn't know properly how to stuff 'em, but they put 'em up on the wall in their front room. Pretty soon their eyes fell out and then they sent away and got some glass eyes that was meant for blind horses. Blue eyes, they was, and when they stuck them blue marbles in them deer heads it was the goddamdest thing. That was in the winter and it wasn't so bad then. But by summer them heads began to stink. They hadn't been dried proper, jest stuffed with sawdust. In hot weather the hides shrank up and the sawdust began leaking out their nose and mouth. And did they stink? The hotter it got, the worse them heads would smell. The farmer didn't mind it 'cause he slept on the other side the house. He said they'd be all right as soon as frost come. But my bed was right up above and it got so the smell would wake me up of nights, chokin' on it." He spat again and concluded with feeling: "I quit the place."

Timothy studied the little man with amused eyes, and he was ready to begin a tale when Tatum ended. So it went on—the lore of Ohio against the drama of the West. If Tatum's accounts were less fantastic, less fabulous than the others, to Alan they were not less satisfying. He found a familiar life in them, and he felt the colors of it about him now—the flat fields, the hot September sky, the groves of hickory and the white bole of a sycamore slanting through a forest, the yellow cut of a creek under a line of little hills. This was the land, and on it was the life he knew—shady villages, spreading towns, sober people, a past already growing dim and a future not without uncertainty. It wasn't unique, nor dramatic, nor distinguished in any way. No

dialect, little folklore, few romantic memories—only the wanderer Audubon walking with tentative step in the wilderness, his eyes always raised, seeking plumage; and the light-foot Johnny Appleseed (*he crossed the Appalachians*) with a deer-hide pack on the shoulder, passing through the land, scattering young orchards among the autumn leaves, in the quiet autumn rains. No clipper ships, no Lone Star Rangers, no magnolia blossoms fragrant in the moonlight, no Buffalo Bill—but a solid life behind him. Few heroes, only the half-legendary Simon Kenton of the settlements and Mad Anthony Wayne. But a host of anonymous men like Grandpa, who came to live in the wilderness and made it yield them their desires.

6

When they had Timothy's name upon the lease, the three brothers asked Roger to consider the terms fulfilled. They had five signatures now. But the old man bristled with anger. They must have Jonas's agreement. At the same time the field men from the gas company pressed them for a contract, and they were compelled to delay again. Then, with surveying instruments set up on the Randall grounds, the brothers drew their chairs up to the green-painted writing table on the veranda, trying to think of their next step.

Far off across the September fields a train whistle cried sadly. Ansel leaned forward in his chair, peering through the pillared trunks in the wood lot to catch the distant plume of smoke. He did find it for a moment, a swift

cloud low against the summer sky, and his eyes shone brightly.

"There's the Hummer," he said, and he lay back in his chair contentedly. "I love the American railroad."

Sterling and Kirkwall exchanged impatient glances. "Better keep your mind on the Buckeye Gas Company," Sterling said. "The railroads are all done anyway," he added, forgetting his own advice. "Those people there," he nodded across the fields, "can't pay interest on their bonds. And the R.F.C. won't give them another cent."

"If they're done," Ansel said, reaching for his pipe, "there's nothing in this country that's got any life left in it. The railroad made America, and when it's done the country's done. I don't say they won't have their ups and downs, but when they're through it's time to start all over again."

Sterling's face clouded. These weren't things he wanted to hear on a vacation. There was enough talk of that kind in Buffalo. The fact that he had brought it on himself didn't make it any pleasanter. He would have a hard time now getting his mind on anything else, because, leaving the railroads out of it, he had the same feeling many times, himself.

Perhaps Ansel had been speaking out of an idle boast for his enthusiasm, but his words left all three of them thoughtful. Kirkwall leaned back in his wicker chair, frowning a little and following the smoke feather of an ore boat around the point. Ansel was tamping tobacco in his pipe, making a small repeated pressure with his lips each time his finger pushed the brown crumbs into the briar bowl. And Sterling, much against his will, was back again in the London

of May, 1926. He had been in England on business that spring, and he had got the scare of his life. In ten days he had seen what many a twentieth century man never dreamed could happen in the seeming order of his civilization. He had seen enough, but he had felt things even more momentous and appalling: The great tidal wave of rebellion that might sweep over the world; the abysmal strength of protest that could halt overnight all the vast courses of routine and paralyze the forces of order . . . He was still haunted by the black fog and the traffic hooting up Piccadilly in the dark; the shatter of window glass in Oxford Street, the faces pressing forward with hunger and wrath; the great dim concourse of Waterloo Station silent and empty, like a heart that has stopped beating; Hyde Park under guard and a milk depot garrisoned there, the lorries swinging through the drives and the big cans bonging with a note of doom; busses with windows shattered and barbed wire barricading the volunteer driver in his cab; and the mob of surly men at the Elephant and Castle, policemen dragged from their mounts, men rushing blindly and with fury out of alleys and courtyards; the dark threats, the ugly rumors spreading over the city—*Liverpool in ruins, Burnley in the hands of rioters, a million men marching down from Birmingham and Manchester*—England poised on the brink of disaster, the England of Milton and Macaulay, of Disraeli and Gladstone, trembling for ten days on the edge of chaos. . . . Sterling brushed a hand across his face. Scarcity in America, want in the land of plenty, need in the midst of abundance. Many times in recent years he had waked at night seeing again the rush of men out of the

fog-black lanes of the Elephant and Castle. Law and order, these were but ideas; but hunger and need are quick with the pulse of life. So far the world can go, and yet hunger and rage are not outdistanced. Scratch the civilization of Radio City and the *Normandie* and Boulder Dam and the Atlas Corporation, and you find the hunger that gnawed a cave man's vitals and the strife that brought Israel to Egypt. The great tidal wave, sleeping, and growing in enormity even while it sleeps. . . .

"One thing," Ansel said, as though he were reading his brother's thought, "if we have a revolution in this country there's no telling who will come out on top."

"There won't be any top," Sterling said somberly. "Not in a country as complicated as this. You can't overturn it. You can only smash it to chaos."

Kirkwall exploded a loud breath and let his chair down to the porch with a bang. "What kind of a Bankers' Club meeting is this? We were talking about leasing these gas rights. I told you those field men have been surveying the Randall grounds. They won't admit it, but I know they weren't over there for the view. If they can't get the lease here they'll try to get the gas from over there, and they'd probably succeed too. It's not a quarter of a mile to the Randall line."

"We've got five signatures," Sterling said. "Tell Jonas he'll have to sign."

Ansel nodded. "There's nothing to do but see Jonas again." He knocked out his pipe in a brass bowl on the writing table. "We might as well do it now."

But Kirkwall disagreed. "There's no use for all of us to go

over there again. He's stubborn, like the rest of them, and it gives him more reason to turn us down when it's one of him against us three. I'll go over and see him alone."

So it was settled. But Jonas was not at the house nor anywhere about the barns. When a hayrack drove into the barnyard, Kirkwall saw his half-brother swaying on top of the load. Jonas scanned the sky anxiously and then lifted his voice across the field where another rack was loading.

Jonas pulled up his horses while a man appeared in the peak of the loft, lowering the fork from its sheltered pulley.

Kirkwall called up. "Can I see you for a minute?"

Jonas looked down in surprise and annoyance. "You can see me forking up this load. We got to get this hay in before Christmas."

Kirkwall flashed a good-natured smile. "All right. I'll come around in the morning."

7

As Timothy discovered the line that lay between the Sletter and the Murdock houses, he looked across Lake Erie with a puzzle in his distant eyes and he searched his memory. Dimly, across those forty changing years, he recalled his brothers' resentment at their father's second marriage. After a time the memory grew clearer; he could see Grace Murdock in her black silk with white lace at the throat, and he remembered the Murdock children growing up in the big house where he and his brothers felt out of place. And yet it seemed strange to him that forty years had not effaced that difference. So much had happened—

it was another life to think back past all those seasons from Dodge City to San Francisco, from Coeur d'Alene to the Rio Grande, and to find these Ohio fields fixed in his memory. And much had happened here: Grace Murdock's death and Peder's not long after, the birth of children, the coming of highways and hotels, and the great procession of black hulls on the lake. So much had happened, it seemed strange that hate could outlast all other changes.

It seemed strange, but it was true enough. He had that first evening at his father's table to prove it if he questioned—Rosemary's face filling with suspicion and defiance, his father's helplessness. It required but that one meal to make it known to him. So he had gone over to his own side. Jonas had welcomed him without question, if with few words and some wonder that a man should appear after all those years away. They made a place for him at once, and he felt at home among them.

Now, on Timothy's second evening, they sat together—brothers, and any one could have known them so, with their lean faces moulded beneath the strong cheek bones, the straight mouth line, the chin that years and weather could not soften. But they sat there strangers, trying to find each other forty years ago, and it was not easy.

This almost forgotten Timothy had been in his house for a day now, not saying much, friendly, wistful in a silent way, and Jonas didn't yet understand how he could be there. His brother Timothy was a boy of eighteen years with quick eyes and a quick smile, who had to try his luck for himself in a new country. But this man was tired and gentle, with the lamplight catching the lines in his weathered face, and

he talked slowly with an unfamiliar drawling. So they sat in the living room, Jonas in his carpet slippers and his shirt sleeves, frowning at his brother Timothy, trying to make one person out of this self-contained man with the flowing white mustache and the boy with eager eyes who had disappeared down the road forty years ago to board the westbound train.

He was the youngest, Jonas reminded himself; and he thought of the three of them as they had gone to the barn the morning of their mother's death—filing silently across the barnyard in the order of their years—Peder, Jonas, Timothy. But now Timothy seemed vaguely older, like a man of another generation. There was a fullness and a finality about him; he had rounded out his life, and it puzzled Jonas to know that he felt a kind of distance and indulgence for him, as a man might feel for his father. Then he thought of Roger Bradley, and it disturbed him to realize that it was so; this was the way he felt about the old man who had waged his struggles in years that Jonas could not know, and who had the calm and distance of ninety years about him now.

"Irrigation has made more promises than fortunes," Timothy was saying out of a memory that Jonas had started. "You know there's less than twenty inches of rainfall after you get past Dodge City or Pierre."

Jonas frowned and nodded, and his brother's voice went on; and while he talked his eyes grew distant in the lamplight. He had not brought back its gold or silver, but all the West was an empire in his mind.

From the porch, accompanying the brothers' voices, came

the subdued murmur of the women, Jonas's wife and Peder's widow, Irma. They were sitting in the soft September dark and their words were low. They were talking about Timothy, wondering at his return at last. With womanly satisfaction they were picturing him in the Homestead with Grandpa, two lonely men together. Just as soon as the Murdocks got away, Timothy should move in there. But the Murdocks—

At that moment there was a soft swish of skirts, and in the dim light falling across the porch Ursula appeared. Her face was strangely troubled, even for Ursula, and it seemed very white with the big dark eyes pleading.

"Good evening, Ursula." And their voices were full of a futile entreaty. In this stricken creature the two families were curiously united, as though by a poignant and roundabout affection.

Ursula mounted the steps and went to the door, looking in upon the two brothers sitting there. Her eyes dwelt for a long moment on the startled face of Timothy, and when they moved to Jonas there was a more than wonted pleading in them. "Where's Jo-Jo? Where's Jo-Jo?" she asked.

"Not here, Ursula," Jonas said with a reluctant sadness. He was a man not often troubled and not troubled easily. But his eyes were haunted as he followed her shadow out into the dark. A simple man can be most moved by the familiar when he does not understand it.

When Jonas looked up he saw a new expression in his brother's eyes. "Tell me about her," Timothy said, leaning from his chair. The West was all forgotten.

"About Ursula?"

"Yes. I remember her, the youngest of the other children. She was a child with curly hair, playing with a kitten. What happened, Jonas? What made her this way?"

"You don't know about Ursula?" Jonas asked incredulously.

"Nobody ever mentioned her."

"No," said Jonas, staring at the darkness. "I suppose they didn't."

"Is she—always that way?"

"Always."

"For how long?"

"It seems forever. Let's see—it was after Peder built his house, because they took care of her there. It must be nearly forty years ago. Soon after you left it must have been."

"She was hurt?"

"A horse trampled her. You remember Peder's stallion, the chestnut? She came through the pasture and he ran at her. Nobody knows just how it happened, nobody was there but Peder." He hesitated, frowning. Then his eyes looked up at Timothy. "They blamed Peder for it. That's why they've been so bitter against us. And we against them," he added.

Timothy nodded silently and sat back in his chair. He saw the strange tall woman moving in darkness through the fields and along the shore, the empty hunger in her face, and on her lips the never changing question.

"Jo-Jo was her kitten. I remember now." He was back those forty years, remembering the golden-haired child who won even the Sletter brothers' hearts—the blue-eyed child

with the yellow ringlets on her shoulders, her hand in one of theirs, peering through the bars in the box stall where the newborn colt was rocking on his spindles.

"Yes, she was looking for her kitten when the stallion trampled her. The doctors said it was pressure on the brain, she couldn't ever get past that idea. You see she's still back there in the pasture looking for it."

It was a curiously intimate sorrow, strangely near to one as though it had happened to himself.

"They tried to operate?" Timothy asked.

"Several times. It never changed her. The last time she nearly died. They lifted the skull clear off her brain, and it nearly killed her. But when she was conscious again she wasn't any different.

"She's the only one of them that ever comes here," Jonas went on after a moment. "The rest hold it against us, but she comes here often. Sometimes she stops to meals with us." He frowned at the paradox.

"I see," Timothy reflected. "That's why they didn't want me there."

"They didn't want you?"

"No. They left the table. I didn't understand it. They had seemed friendly, too, showing me the gas seep and having me sign the lease."

"You signed the lease?" Jonas asked slowly. His mouth was hardening before his brother had replied.

"They got you to sign the lease and then they turned you out," he said, and his voice was gathering feeling. "We're not fit for them to have around, but we can sign the lease for them. Well, that settles it. I'll not sign the lease if the

whole farm blows up with gas. They're up against it, you understand. They're just about cleaned out. This is the only chance they've got to save their hides. Sterling and Kirk have got their money tied up in receiverships, and Ansel has loaned them every cent he had. They're all in it together. This is their only chance. I had a notion to sign, but now it's settled."

Timothy sat there wondering at the bitterness in his brother's face. Then he saw again that picture of Ursula wandering through the wood lot and over the shore. For forty years he had made his journeys over the West, city streets and lonely cabins, construction camp and mining town, railroad and pack train and afoot on mountain trails —and all that time she had wandered through these grounds with the child's question on her lips and the sadness unchanging in her face.

They sat there silent, and the air seemed to grow closer. Dim and far, a roll of thunder sounded.

Jonas shook himself. "Better put the storm canvas down, I guess." He started for the porch. "It sounds like a norther coming."

8

At midnight the storm broke. An instant's brilliance showed the thunderheads towering in the north, and in the prolonged quiver of another flashing the low clouds moved and massed. Over the lake a hidden sound was growing, a rumor vast and undefined. A cannonade of thunder toppled down the sky, and then the rising sound emerged,

nearer now, and a fresh wind poured along the shore. In another moment a gale roared through the hemlocks and rushed on inland through the grove. With it came the hard multitudinous pelting, on land and water, the deep threshing of driven rain that was the somber voice out of darkness.

In the morning the rain had stopped, but a weight still hung over the land. A heavy sky lowered darkly and the whole long sweep of shore roared with a ribbed gray surf. Menacing and tireless, the seas rose in their dark ridges and broke with a torrent of white thunder. Far up on the sand a wavering line of weed and driftage marked the seas' strength in the night.

Kirkwall was up early, walking on the shore with long strides that kept the rhythms of surf. His eyes swept the broken lake and his lungs filled with the storm-stress still lingering in the air, like danger, and as he walked his feet pressed out water from the sand, a spreading whiteness starting from each step. For a moment he stood upon the old wharf and felt the pilings tremble to his weight. He wondered that the rotting pier had not been swept aside in the night. The weathered planks were dark as velvet with rain and sea. From the north the wind was still blowing and long gray waves broke over the scarred timbers. The whole wharf trembled like a ship at each impact.

Kirkwall did not stop this morning for his swim. Instead he went on up the shore to Jonas's. The house was silent, though a thread of smoke blew from the kitchen chimney. Out to the barns he started, and then he saw his half-brother in the hayfield beyond.

Kirkwall went through the gate, his steps silent on the

rain-soft earth, and stood beside him. "Get caught with your hay cut?" he asked.

Jonas looked around without surprise. "Some of it."

"I see there are some trees down in the wood lot. Big ones, too. I don't think I ever saw a storm like this before."

"We have 'em in September," Jonas said.

"That's right. We're late this year. We're always gone by Labor Day."

Jonas nodded.

"We'd be gone now," Kirkwall said pleasantly, "if we had this gas lease settled." Then he went right to the point. "And we've got to get it settled one way or the other. We can't put them off any longer. They've had men surveying the Randall shore line and they'll sign a lease with them if we don't make up our minds. The chances are they could pump out all our gas from wells over there."

Jonas did not seem persuaded. He stood there with a line in his brow under the big straw hat he wore, and his eyes were filling with hostility. His sunburned face looked very dark with his broad hat shadowing the uneasy morning light.

Kirkwall tried again. "I'll be frank with you. This means a lot to us. You know we've been pretty hard hit—called loans and interest due. Everything is at stake unless we can pull it out now. You've had the farm all along; now there's a chance to realize on the land and not lose an acre of it."

"Ruin an orchard," Jonas said flatly.

"You could plant a dozen orchards with what this will bring in."

"Clutter up the place," Jonas said.

Kirkwall was in his most tactful and persuasive mood. He answered every objection that Jonas could muster, and at last he smiled a broad, frank smile, showing his strong teeth, white as stones. "Look here, Jonas," he said, "we can understand each other."

Jonas frowned down at the hay stubble.

"You haven't a thing to lose," Kirkwall went on. "That orchard isn't worth two hundred dollars a year, I know that. I'll pay you two hundred a year besides your share in the royalties, if that will help any. But it's not the orchard you're worried about; it's the family. It's the old grudge—Murdocks and Sletters. Now we've got a chance to agree on something. There's no sense in remembering how we haven't got along."

Jonas screwed up his gray eyes, though there was no sun to narrow them, and his jaw tightened slowly.

"There's no sense in it, is there?" Kirkwall repeated.

Jonas took a slow breath. "No sense in it?" he echoed, and he breathed again. His voice grew louder. "No, there's no sense in it. There never has been any sense in it, but for forty years you've been too good for us. You never wanted to have anything to do with us. You blamed my brother for your sister's accident. My brother died talking about her, because you said he was the cause of it. You're still too good for us. You still despise us, and you always will."

Kirkwall was shaking his head and protesting. "No. That's not true." He opened his hands in a pleading gesture. "Don't you see that's all past? That was long ago, when we were only children. It ought to be forgotten. We'd all be happier. Now it's time to forget. It was all over long ago."

"All over?" Jonas snorted, his dark face growing heavier with anger. "Just two days ago my brother was invited to eat at my father's table. And the Murdocks were too good to eat with him. They left the table. What do you think we are? Farm hands?"

"The thing got started, but now it's time it stopped," Kirkwall said earnestly. "Now we have a chance to end it. If you'll just agree to the lease—"

"Yes. We can help pull your business out of the fire. We aren't good enough to eat a meal with you, but we can save your mortgages."

"We need your help, of course. We're asking for it."

"Well," Jonas thundered, "I'll not do it. I wouldn't sign my name to save you all from hell. That goes for the whole lot of them." He turned back toward the barn. "You can go along and tell them so."

9

At breakfast, Ursula was not in her place at the table. They had their fruit and then their eggs and buttered toast, and still her chair was empty and the untouched melon tilting on her plate.

"Where's Ursula?" Ansel asked finally. "She never misses breakfast."

"She must be sleeping," Rosemary said. "The rain and the cool wind and all. I felt like sleeping myself."

"I don't know what I got up for," Ruth said, yawning and looking out at the gray sky.

Donna looked up suddenly from her coffee. "She's not sleeping, mother."

"Who?"

"Ursula. I remember her door was open as I came past. She must have got up."

"Probably had her breakfast early," Ansel said, "and gone outside. You know she always likes a storm."

Rosemary rang for Hulda. "Did Ursula have her breakfast?" she asked when the cook came in.

"Ursula? No, she didn't have no breakfast."

"Have you seen her downstairs this morning?"

"No, I ain't seen her."

"She's probably outside," Ansel repeated. "She'll come in when she gets hungry."

When they had finished, Rosemary carried Grandpa's breakfast upstairs to him. She saw Ursula's door open and went down the hall to look inside. The bed had not been slept in. That sent her through the house again, asking anxiously. But no one had seen Ursula anywhere.

"She didn't sleep in her bed last night," Rosemary insisted.

But that was not uncommon. Sometimes through some choice of her own she slept in a glider on the porch, or even in a hammock between the trees, lying there with starlight on her face and the summer noises all about her.

"But not last night," Rosemary insisted. "She couldn't sleep outside last night."

They remembered then that they had not seen her since she sat at the supper table, and they recalled that she had been nervous throughout the meal and had left them still seated there, getting up suddenly while Hulda served her coffee, asking Hulda, "Where's Jo-Jo?" and going outside. No one had seen her since.

"She's been here all her life," Ansel said, warming himself before the fireplace after a brief turn in the raw wind on the terrace. "She can't get lost. She's probably out walking somewhere. She'll be back just the same as ever."

But she was not back for lunch, and they sat silent at the table. When the meal was done, Hulda asked, "Shall I keep Miss Ursula's lunch for her?"

Rosemary turned anxiously to her father. "Where could she be, Father?"

Roger shook his head.

"Something is wrong," Rosemary insisted. "She's never been away like this."

"Sometimes she has a meal at the other houses," he suggested.

"Yes, but she's never away like this. We shouldn't have let her go out last night. Maybe she got caught in the storm. Maybe she's hurt somewhere."

"She can take care of herself," Ansel said.

"No, she can't. She hasn't been herself recently. Haven't you seen how nervous and upset she's been?"

"That's right," Donna said. "She's been different. Something has upset her."

"It's Timothy," Rosemary said with sudden resentment.

Roger looked sternly at her. "Rosemary!"

"It is," she repeated, her voice rising. "It's Timothy, I know it is. She hasn't been the same since he came here."

Ansel pushed his chair back. "We'll have to find her."

Soon the word had gone around the terrace. "Ursula's disappeared. . . . Nobody has seen Ursula. . . . She hasn't been seen all day. . . ."

To the Sletter houses as well as to the Murdocks the word went, and Rosemary was even standing at a Sletter door, her voice urgent in the troubled light, asking Alan's mother, "Have you seen her anywhere?"

"She came to Jonas's last night," Irma said. "We were sitting on the porch, and she came there for a minute. Then she started back this way. It was beginning to look like a storm, and we thought she was going home."

"She didn't come home all night," Rosemary said. "Nobody has seen her."

Then they began searching in earnest. They scattered and went out in all directions, their eyes seeking a tall dark figure moving alone. Both families were occupied together now. Jonas went methodically through the barns, searching the granaries and the harness rooms, climbing to the mows and wading over deep billows of hay; Ursula had been known to mount those dim hillsides to watch the pigeons nesting in the sun-barred cupola where the dust motes drifted up a golden ladder. But there was no lattice of sunlight now; the pigeons huddled under the eaves and the wet north wind complained among the bars, and Ursula was nowhere there. When he had gone through the barns, Jonas called the men from their work in the cattle lot and sent them to the fields to find a woman wandering. The hands looked at him in a blank puzzle, and Jonas's voice rose as he waved them away. Then he went on to the carriage shed to search among the dusty superstructure of gang plows, rollers, binders, reapers, steam engine, and threshing machine. Timothy walked thoughtfully along the shore, searching the sand for footprints, and stopping at last in surprise when he looked up to see a hotel's balconies above him. He

turned back, his eyes again on the sand and all around him the deep-voiced disconsolate surf, strangely like a mountain wind roaring through spruce ridges. Ansel had driven down the highway, and he looked into all the side roads, peering at the lanes where the weeds grew up rank and tall. But all the roads were empty, the rain-pools mirroring the heavy sky and the dull goldenrod bent low with wind and rain. Sterling wandered through the wood lot, his mind burdened with the double weight of Ursula and the futile orchard project. Kirkwall was far down the lower shore, staring at a fallen sycamore that lay across the beach and turning fearfully to the loud gray waste of water that pounded on the sand; Ursula had never learned to swim. Even Tatum Young was out, shambling through the orchard rows, seeing the bruised fruit that the storm had shaken from the boughs. Occasionally he stooped for an apple in the sodden grass and with his knife he cut off discs to munch as he went on. The women walked back and forth across the terrace as though Ursula might appear suddenly and without warning there. Grandpa escaped the nurse and came stiffly down from the veranda. When he began hobbling with his cane across the terrace, his eyes searching the grounds, Rosemary rushed to meet him. The wind was cold with a gray mist driving from the lake, and the ground was sodden. With a pleading sternness Rosemary hurried the old man back to the fireplace in the living room. "We've got Ursula to worry about, father. Now don't make us worry about you." When she saw how he fumed and trembled she called the doctor and stood over him with the nurse until the doctor came.

At last Alan went out, against his mother's admonition, to

take his part. Following an instinct of his own, he went back to the clump of cedars where the Bradley headstones stood. It was a melancholy place with the wind uneasy in the cedar trees and the gravestones dark with rain. Here Ursula sometimes came, to sit, unknowing, by the grave of her mother, Grace Murdock, and those of Elsa Sletter and her son Peder and her two infants, unnamed, and the smaller mound too, almost anonymous now, of Jo-Jo the cat.

But Ursula was not there. The wind made its grieving in the tree tops and the cold mist softened the orchard boughs beyond and from the shore there came the endless trouble of the surf. Alan coughed, leaning against a tree trunk while the brief fit shook his body and swam through his head. When his eyes had cleared he saw a figure down the dim orchard rows. He peered harder, and his heart pounded quickly. But as he started forward he saw it was not Ursula's tall dark figure but the bent thin shuffling shape of Tatum Young.

Tatum looked up in surprise when Alan appeared. "Howdy, Alan. Lookin' for her?"

"Yes," Alan said.

"I been all through the orchard. Thought she might of got this gas, like Sam did. Thought she might be lyin' in here some place."

Alan's eyes grew startled.

"But she ain't here. I been down ev'ry row." He cut off another disc of apple and tucked it in his cheek. Mebbe they've found her somewhere else by now."

"No. They said they'd ring the bell."

Alan coughed again, his shoulders rocking. "Guess I'd better go back," he said in a thin voice.

His eyes were no longer questing as he walked through the wet grass, his feet sometimes stumbling on a hidden windfall that turned beneath his step. But at the orchard's edge his breath stopped short and his heart was pounding.

"Jo-Jo!" A raised voice on the wind came to him faintly. "Jo–Jo! Jo-Jo!"

Then he saw her through the trees. In that first glance he saw the torn clothing and the dark hair, broken from its combs, flowing down her shoulders. He saw the wet garments clinging to her and even at that distance he could read the wild disorder in her face. "Jo-Jo! Jo-Jo!" She was running through the orchard rows, her eyes blindly ahead of her as though she followed something. While Alan watched, she bent down as though to pick it up and then, not ceasing in her stride, she hurried on as it eluded her.

Alan's voice lifted. "Ursula! Stop, Ursula!" And he was running after her. She did not pause or seem to hear. Before he could intercept her, she had disappeared over the sand cliff to the shore. In an instant, without waiting before he plunged down the steep bank, he saw her stoop again upon the empty beach. Then, with eyes on that elusive nothing, she pressed out upon the wharf where the planks were wet with the high surf's breaking.

Again Alan was shouting, his voice raised fearfully. Far down the shore Kirkwall heard it. He leaped over the sycamore and raced toward the wharf where a dark figure showed above the swift white ridges.

Alan stumbled in deep sand at the bank's edge. When he

was on his feet again, Ursula was stooping at the end of the wharf. A sea broke into white chaos. For an instant Alan glimpsed a black swirl of garments and a white face under streaming hair. As he crossed the wharf the figure disappeared. A new sea rose green. Alan tore off his jacket and plunged into that dark curve of water. The shock of it left him breathless, and he gulped a mouthful of air before a new wave broke. His shoes weighted his feet and his clothing pulled at him, but in the rising crest he saw Ursula. With a desperate thrust he reached her and turned to see the wharf receding; the seas were carrying them out. Another ridge of water broke. It sucked at Ursula's heavy clothing. Turning in his grasp, she reached out a blind hand and strangled him. Before he could free himself she pulled him under. Locked in that embrace, with the seas breaking over them, the two bodies struggled.

A moment later Kirkwall plunged from the wharf. In a few strokes he had reached them. Waiting for the break of a sea he lifted them into the crest and let it carry them forward. Submerged, he got his feet upon sand and held them against the backwash. A new breaking lifted them ahead. Another hold on sand, and another wave lifting them forward. Then he was in shallow water. When he had dragged the entwined figures onto the beach, the others were racing down the bank and beyond the terrace a bell was ringing wildly.

They separated the two bodies and carried them to the Homestead.

"Call the doctor!" Kirkwall shouted across the terrace.

"He's already here," Ansel said, "with Grandpa."

They laid them both in Grandpa's room, Ursula in the big bed and Alan on the couch beside the window bay. One look at Ursula's staring eyes was all the doctor required. Then, with the nurse beside him, he bent over Alan.

10

Outside the closed door the two families waited silent. Kirkwall stood there with his wet clothes dripping a slow rain onto the floor and he did not hear his wife whispering that he must change into something dry. At last she disappeared and brought back a change of clothes. Kirkwall looked at them absently before he stepped into the spare room to put them on. Jonas stared stolidly at the floor, so occupied with a dull weight in him that he did not wonder at his being in this house among these people. Timothy stood quiet beside him, his hands moving slowly along the stair rail, his eyes full of distance and patience. With a stern silent command in her face, Rosemary led her father downstairs. She put the old man in a wing chair in the living room, and there she sat beside him, her eyes earnest and her voice soothing him quietly. The Sletter women were in a knot at the stair's head, Alan's mother standing in a way that resembled the engraving of Grandma Sletter, with her face earnest and simple and unflinching. All her attention was strained to catch the movements and footfalls beyond the door, and at her sides her hands were clenched tightly. At the end of the hall, in a window gray with the lowering sky, Donna stood grimly. Her eyes stared across the terrace where the long gray ridges pounded on the sand. That

throbbing was a presence in the house; even through closed doors and windows it brought its sullen and prolonged disquiet.

At last the door opened and the doctor appeared. Their eyes went to him, fearing and entreating.

"He's conscious," the doctor said, and Alan's mother clung to the rail for support. "He's weak, but we'll pull him through all right."

Donna looked into the room where Alan lay. She saw his face thin and restless as he struggled for breath in his scant lungs, his cheeks flushed falsely and his hair disordered on the pillow. Before the door closed she caught a glimpse of Ursula lying in the big white bed, her wet garments outlining her quiet. But her face seemed untroubled. Her eyes were wide with a childish expectancy and her mouth was parted gently. Then, as the door closed, she heard Alan's coughing and her fingers bit into her palms.

Her eyes went back to the gray waste of water, but that glimpse of Ursula stayed in her mind—Ursula still with a child's longing and wonder, lying now untroubled and quiet. Outside, the note of surf rose in a sullen thunder, and through the door she heard the muffled coughing. That sound came to her like repeated blows. Her hands clenched tighter, and her mind shook with a storm of protest and rebellion. Was it not better Ursula's way—to know nothing about life and death, about suffering and ecstasy and struggle?

When she became aware of the world again the terrace looked unfamiliar and the restless lake, broken like a field under that weight of sky, seemed unknown to her. Behind

that door Alan lay struggling for life and Ursula lay with life gone from her, and now the place where they belonged seemed alien and without meaning. So quickly, she realized, death makes of the world a strange place. The very earth seems different, more cold and heedless and remote; the sky is not different, it merely seems more near, because it is infinite and awful and the mind gazes on that gulf of space and remembers what is there to read and ponder in all seasons. Now she remembered, with a curious surprise, seeing her grandfather gaze across the level fields to the still white church spire at Pride's Crossing, the quiet spire that pointed so serenely at the void.

Quietly the others had gone downstairs, and when Donna joined them there she saw how strangely the two families were reunited. Ursula was gone from them and Alan lay fighting for his life, and now their shared grief and anxiety made them look into one another's faces and find there the same sadness and the same hope.

"I told him not to go outside," Alan's mother was saying. "But when he knew Ursula was lost he couldn't stay."

"He found her, too," Kirkwall said. "If only we'd been nearer we could have saved them both."

Then there were footsteps on the porch and Kirkwall went outside. Two agents from the Buckeye Gas Company stood there. They had come for the contract. It was the last chance. Were they to have the lease?

Kirkwall looked into the living room where Sterling sat at his father's side and Ansel waited with Donna, his arm about her.

"No," Kirkwall said quietly. "We haven't any contract.

Without warning Jonas appeared in the doorway, his big red face looking questioningly from Kirkwall to the agents.

"What do they want?" he asked.

"Nothing," Kirkwall said. "It doesn't matter now."

"The gas contract," the men explained. "This is the last time we can offer it."

For a moment Jonas stood undecided, looking from one to the other with that question still in his face. Then he turned to his brother. "Give me your pen," he said brusquely, "and get that contract, Kirkwall."

II

They brought him a supper on a tray, and Alan sat up, his eyes suddenly aware of all they did.

"Eat your supper, and when you want to you can go downstairs," the doctor said. "Just so you don't go swimming again for a while."

The food gave him an immediate strength, and while he ate it Alan went over again in his mind the confused memory of struggle and exhaustion. Outside, the western sky was clearing. Under the dark mass of cloud a depth of blue had opened. All at once a long slant of sunlight streamed across the terrace and flooded the room. It bathed the tall white bed where Ursula lay.

"Here's some dry clothes your mother brought," the nurse said as she carried out the tray. "They're all downstairs having a supper in the living room. You can go down if you want to."

Before he left the room Alan stood beside the big bed

where the sunset light came warmly. It touched the face on the pillows, and Alan wondered at the stillness of those features. There was no anguish or struggle about her; Ursula had never looked more gentle. A white spread hid her torn wet clothing and her hair was parted, framing her face softly, and now she seemed at rest. She had died, then, in peace, recovering her Jo-Jo, stooping to the water to take the golden ball into her arms. Standing there with his own fatigue and sorrow, Alan wondered what her life had been. In that face, so strangely resting after all her years of sadness, there was no realization of the hope, the wonder, the confusion, and the pain that men call living. She had been one of them, but she had never known the world of man's understanding; she had left it so little knowing what it was, so much of it untasted. Yet, he asked himself, who can possess it all? Is not that the longing and regret—always the life unrealized, so much we never know or dream of? Some world of her own, she had, some lonely world of illusion and imagining. And is there ever more than that? Napoleon (his history came to him again), Napoleon Bonaparte, most ruthless and pragmatic of the world's men of genius, declared, "Imagination rules the world." Perhaps she had not missed it after all. What is life but a seeking? *Where's Jo-Jo? Where's Jo-Jo?* (Man with his trouble and his dreams, suffering the graver pains of his spirit when the body gives him rest.)

Quietly he went down the stairs, and he slipped unnoticed past the living room, where they were eating a tray supper and Hulda, with an expression of unbelief on her wrinkled face, was going from Sterling to Jonas pouring coffee from

a silver pot. But something informed Donna, and she put her plate down and left her mother's side. She came to him on the porch. "Alan!" And they were in each other's arms.

"Are you all right?" she asked incredulously. "So soon?"

"They only had to get the water out of me."

"Did they say you could get up?"

Alan smiled. "Of course. Only I don't want to see them yet." And he nodded toward the living room.

His face was thin and drawn, but the sunset was in his eyes. She stood on tiptoe to reach his mouth. "I'm so glad, Alan."

Hand in hand they went down the steps and across the terrace, and only Roger Bradley looked out to see them walking against the hemlock line where the sunlight fell in golden bars. He sat in his wing chair between Rosemary and Irma, and all at once his face filled with tranquillity. Around him now his sons were gathered. His gray eyes counted them together—Jonas, Timothy, Sterling, and Kirkwall; and outside were the fields that he had won, a land possessed by more lives than his own, an earth enriched by courage and patience, hardihood and self-sacrifice. His mind went briefly to a picture of drill towers and pipe lines violating his orchard, and that didn't matter now. He looked at the two figures standing in the last sunlight on that shore, and while he watched them his eyes filled with many memories. He had walked alone in the fields while the child Ursula lay stricken, and in those hours the land was not solace; the earth he had cleared, the ground he had broken was aloof and alien to his need. In the slow seasons after Grace Murdock's death he had walked upon those acres like a man

seeking something he had lost and looking in the only place he knew. He heard the cattle, and he marked the fowls roosting in the dark, and he felt the sadness in the fields, the sadness that a field knows on a starless night, and the patient trouble of the water. And what he searched for was not apparent. But now, even though Ursula lay so still upstairs, this land seemed rich with life. Beside him Timothy's low voice was talking; Roger remembered how he had taught a clear-eyed boy to hold a plowshare steady, to drive a wilful team, to judge the time for planting when moisture was not too heavy in the ground, to know the signs of ripened grain and the feel of hay matured and ready. All these were only surfaces, however; the real was hidden. He looked at the two figures on the shore and knew that it was not the way of life, but life itself that mattered. The orchard might grow up in drill towers; in time the farm itself must yield to change. But the heritage was theirs.

He looked up suddenly. "I'll have another cup of coffee, Hulda."

Rosemary bent over him like a mother. "You've had your coffee, father. You know you shouldn't take more."

"Fact is," Roger said, "I was wishing it was something stronger." He held out his cup as Hulda came.

Rosemary shook her head helplessly. "I haven't known you to talk that way for years."

Roger gave her an indulgent smile. "I haven't felt this way for years."

Outside, Donna and Alan stood by the old apple tree watching the white surf, rose-tinted in the dying light. The long waves mounted, stood poised for an instant, and then

cascaded on the sands. Overhead the sky was breaking open; the first white stars showed incredibly small and distant, and a soft wind blew down.

Donna tightened her fingers in his hand and drew a long breath. "We oughtn't to stay out, Alan."

"Just a minute longer. Till one more star comes out."

The west slowly darkened, and the surf beat out its broken rhythms. While they watched, the whole world of earth and sky and sea seemed theirs. The realization came as neither of them had ever known it before—the melancholy lake, the dim water leaning distantly on darkness, the high white stars, the deep magnetic earth—all was theirs and they each other's. It was not necessary to feel or to have more than that, only to know that life was theirs and that out of space and time and the heart's journey they had come together.

When they walked back to the Homestead, the lights were burning in the living room, and upstairs a subdued light shone where Ursula was lying, and there were quiet voices on the porch. Across the fields came the lonely cry of a train, prolonged and wavering and repeated. When it had ceased Ansel struck a match and held it to his pipe. The brief flare showed Timothy smoking beside him.

"Listen to that," Ansel said when the whistle echoed again. He turned confidentially in the darkness to Timothy. "I love the American railroad."

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